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## Counting Lives in a Theater of Terror - an Analysis of Media-oriented Hostage Takings in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia

by Judith Tinnes

### *Abstract*

*This article summarizes key findings of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of media-oriented hostage takings involving local people and foreigners in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia during a five-year period (01-01-2004 to 12-31-2008). Based on a long-term tracking of Islamist online publications, the chosen approach did not only allow to identify static values, but also granted insights into developments over time. Characteristic patterns regarding responsible organizations, nationalities of victims, distribution channels for hostage media, etc. could in this way be identified. The kidnappers' organizational affiliation turned out to be the most significant variable. It decisively affected other factors like number of abductions, likelihood of fatal outcome or duration of a kidnapping. As a consequence, the highest attention should be given to this parameter when dealing with hostage situations. Another key finding is that insurgents have been increasingly refraining from broadcasting visual representations of extreme violence. This article is based on the German-language dissertation J. Tinnes. "Internetnutzung islamistischer Terror- und Insurgentengruppen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von medialen Geiselnahmen im Irak, Afghanistan, Pakistan und Saudi-Arabien" - in English: "Internet Usage of Islamist Terrorist and Insurgent Groups with Special Regard for Media-oriented Hostage Takings in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia"). [1] In the following I shall summarize key findings in order to make them accessible to non-German speaking readers.*

### *Introduction*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Internet has established itself as a leading medium for the distribution of terrorist messages. As a communication strategy, terrorism is dependent on a dissemination of its deeds by the mass media to be able to unfold its full psychological effect. [2] Jihadists and their sympathizers have recognized that the Internet – due to its power to realize a more even playing ground than hierarchical one-way media – is an excellent medium for a new form of warfare: Electronic Jihad (E-Jihad). This is especially true for terrorist hostage takers who are using the stage of the world to play their theater of terror. [3] The choreography of their kidnapping operations fulfills all needs of high-drama theater as noted by Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn: "script preparation, cast selection, sets, props, role playing, and minute-by-minute stage management" [4] The strategy of kidnapping is particularly well suited for getting an extraordinary media attention. Most hostage takings last for a prolonged period during which they unfold a dramatic potential. While bombings, suicide attacks, sniper operations and other terrorist strategies are often anti-climatic and are usually only reported

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when the events have already come to an end, the media coverage of acts of hostage taking normally starts at a moment when the terrorist activity is still ongoing and the result of the kidnapping drama is open-ended. The uncertainty about the fate of a hostage creates suspense – the key ingredient for a sensational infotainment story likely to capture the attention of large audiences. This explains why kidnappings have become established as a mass-phenomenon in conflict zones with high terrorist activity such as Iraq or the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AfPak) region.

### *Methodology*

In my dissertation, I have conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of media-oriented hostage takings of local people and foreigners in four countries. My working definition is derived from Crelinsten and Szabo [5]:

A hostage taking is a form of extortion, during which a militant organization seizes one or more persons and holds them at an undisclosed location to achieve political, financial, or psychological goals.

By media-oriented hostage takings I understand kidnappings during which media publications (videos, images, audio statements) were released. Media-oriented hostage takings tend to get a high level of attention from mass media and play an often decisive role.

Minwoo Yun has observed that “...this area of study has suffered a shortage of quantitative data and corresponding analyses. Thus, most studies and articles on this topic have been descriptive and narrative.” [6] I therefore tried to arrive at concrete numbers and percentage values for media-oriented kidnappings. By using numerical results, characteristic patterns (e.g. responsible groups, nationalities of victims, forms of used violence) could be visualized, from which actionable knowledge for decision-makers involved in future acts of hostage-taking might be derived. Practical information on the identity and nationality of kidnappers and their victims as well as ideology, aims, modus operandi and demands of terrorist groups can assist policy-makers confronted with a kidnapping crisis.

Due to the high number of kidnapping cases worldwide, this analysis was limited to a five-year period (January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2008). Geographically, it was confined to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The year 2004 was selected as entry point because it marked the beginning of a kidnapping wave in Iraq; many of these were very media-oriented hostage takings. Afghanistan and Pakistan were chosen because similar abduction waves emerged. The insurgents from the AfPak region often used reports on the nefarious activities of their Iraqi brethren as a blue print. Saudi Arabia was included in my sample for reasons of contrasting: while, on the one hand, the situation in the Saudi Kingdom showed clear parallels to the kidnapping wave in Iraq (existence of an Al-Qaeda branch, kidnapping and attack wave in 2004), Saudi Arabia is a country with more stable political structures – hence insurgents could not gain ground to the same extent they managed to do in the other three nations examined here. A special focus of my analysis was on non-Western victims since they

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are often disregarded or ignored by Western mainstream media. My analysis was also meant to counteract this selective tendency and offer an analysis that is as inclusive and integrated as possible in the current data situation.

The basis of the data survey was a long-term tracking of Islamist Internet presences – which I have been conducting since early 2006 – as well as a retrospective survey for the years 2004 and 2005, using media reports. During three years, relevant Islamist online presences were searched for new publications on a daily basis and all relevant material was archived. In addition, secondary sources like online news outlets, websites of experts and institutions in the terrorism research field as well as topic-related discussion forums like *Clearinghouse Infovlad* and *Terroristmedia* were used. The information gathered was sorted, aggregated and condensed in the form of data tables. [7]

For the years 2004/2005, only hostage takings with at least one fatality could be taken into account due to the fact that the daily long-term tracking started only in 2006; events in earlier years had to be researched retrospectively based on media reports. A practical consideration was that incidents during which people are killed are rather more often reported by the mainstream media than those without any fatality. [8] As most Western mainstream media tend to disregard or ignore non-Western hostages – especially if there are no fatalities – a retrospective analysis exclusively based on secondary sources would have produced only partial results. Hence, the 2004/2005 data survey for the analysis was restricted to those newsworthy hostage takings involving fatalities. Because of the different survey approaches, I split the data in two different sets to allow for greater accuracy. The first set (Corpus 1 / below: C1) contains hostage cases with fatalities from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2008. The second set (Corpus 2 / below: C2) comprises not only kidnappings with fatalities (in which it overlaps with C1) but also abductions with other possible outcomes (hostages freed, fates of captives unknown) for the period January 1, 2006, to December 31, 2008.

The assembled data were analyzed with the help of simple descriptive statistical methods. What follows are my key findings.

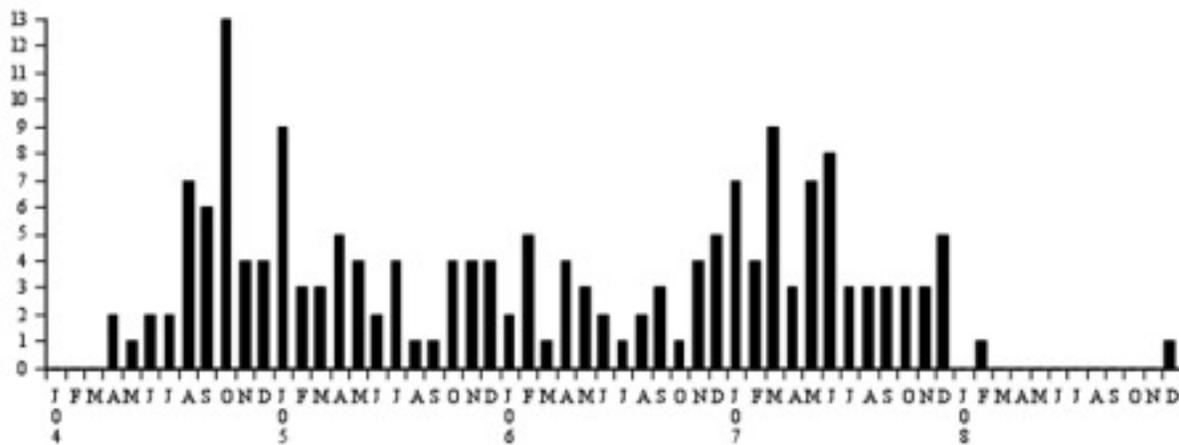
## **Results**

### *Number of Hostage Takings and Hostages*

Between January 1, 2004 and December 31, 2008, a total of 178 kidnappings with fatalities was recorded (C1). All told, during those incidents, 545 persons were seized. In the period from January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2008, there were 107 abductions (involving 373 persons), in which the victims were eventually either killed or freed; in some cases their fate remains unknown (C2). On average, there were three (3.0) kidnappings every month (C1 and C2). Figure 1 shows that the monthly number of hostage takings during the analyzed period was fluctuating. Experts have come to the conclusion that the abduction rate underlies rhythms and cycles. Such dynamics can not only be observed with kidnappings but also occur with other forms of terrorist activities. [9] Conducting attacks at a symbolically ‘loaded’ point

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in time is a popular terrorist strategy - such a conduct maximizes the newsworthiness of an attack. Experts have attributed the abrupt start of the kidnapping wave in Iraq in April 2004 to the U.S. military engagement in the unrest city of Falluja, which started April 4th. Reacting to the military operation, insurgents began to kidnap foreigners to dissuade the country of origin of the hostages from joining the 'coalition of the willing' or – if they already belonged to it – to raise their troop levels. The abduction wave culminated in a rush of kidnappings in the month of October. A catalyst for this development could have been the holy month of Ramadan, during which Jihadists tend to increase their attacks. Yet with regard to hostage takings, this assumption is problematic; no clear correlation between the abduction rate and the holy month of Ramadan could be observed in the following years.



**Figure 1: Hostage Takings 2004-2008: Month-per-Month Abduction Rate**

Motivated by high media attention, many armed groups soon adopted hostage-taking as a strategy, triggering a wave of kidnappings. Thomas Hegghammer called it

a classic case of 'contagion', i.e. terrorist actors learning from one another [...] Put simply, the introduction of the abduction tactic by certain groups at the outbreak of the Falluja crisis most likely inspired other insurgents groups and militias to adopt the same tactic, thus creating a snowball effect or 'epidemic' [10]

One example for a correlation between the abduction rate and symbolic events are the parliamentary elections in Iraq on January 30, 2005. In the weeks prior to the elections, insurgents launched a series of attacks against voters, polling stations, election workers and candidates [11] to avoid the establishment of a democracy – a political system which, according to their purist interpretation of Islam, runs counter to proper Islamic ruling because of its principle of man-made law (instead of God-given law). Three of the abducted persons shown in January 2005 hostage videos had been directly involved in the election process. Ten of the hostages executed on-camera during that month were killed in broad daylight on busy streets. Observers regarded this brazen action as a carefully crafted strategy of psychological

warfare aimed at demonstrating the perpetrators' power and, by implication, the weakness of the Iraqi government.

In 2008, with a total of only two (C1), respectively six (C2) abductions, the kidnapping rate reached its lowest level to date. On average, 0.2 (C1), respectively, 0.5 (C2) abductions occurred per month. This positive development can be mainly attributed to the improvement of the security situation in Iraq.

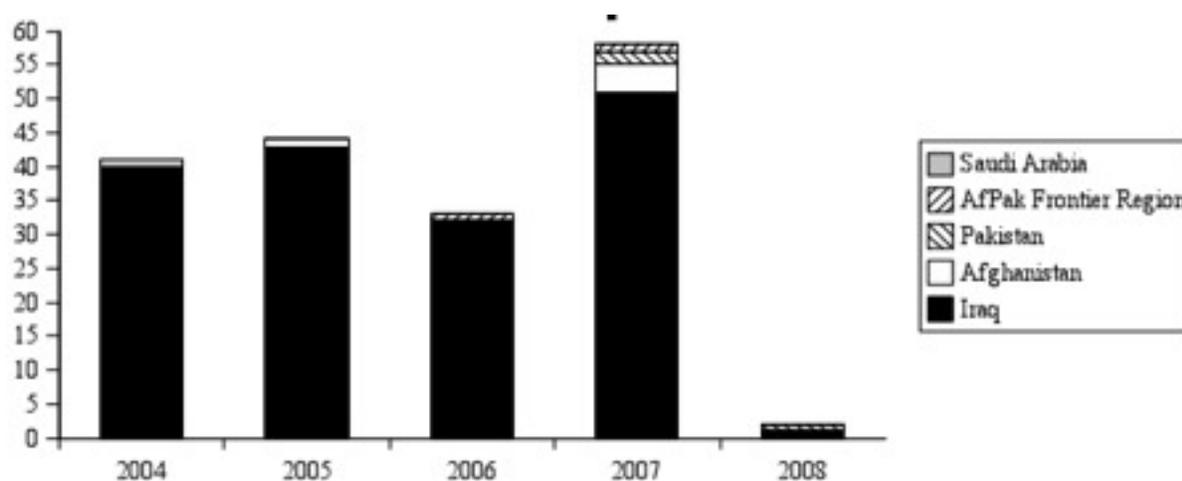
#### *Location of Hostage Takings*

The bulk of recorded kidnappings took place in Iraq. 167 (93.8%) of the incidents recorded in C1 and 91 (85.1%) of the cases in C2 happened in Mesopotamia. The other examined countries played only a secondary role:

- Afghanistan: C1: 5 kidnappings (2.8%) / C2: 8 kidnappings (7.5%)
- Pakistan: C1: 3 kidnappings (1.7%) / C2: 6 kidnappings (5.6%)
- AfPak frontier region [12]: C1: 2 kidnappings (1.1%) / C2: 2 kidnappings (1.9%)
- Saudi Arabia: C1: 1 kidnapping (0.6%) / C2: 1 kidnapping (0.9%)

Hence, only 5.6% of the abductions in C1 and 15.0% in C2 took place in the AfPak region. In Saudi Arabia, only a single hostage taking – belonging to both data sets – was recorded. This low number can be attributed to the stable security situation in the Kingdom, where successful counter-terrorism operations by the security apparatus prevented the insurgents from gaining a foothold.

If one looks at the geographic location of acts of hostage taking, one can see that, on the one hand, Afghanistan and Pakistan have begun to play a growing role in kidnappings (see figure 2). This is due to the facts that the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban movements have been gaining momentum and are taking over the media tactics of their Iraqi brethren. On the other hand, it is important to point out that the abduction activities in those nations have never reached the volume of Iraq – at least so far.



**Figure 2: Hostage Takings per Year by Country 2004-2008 (C1)**

While in the years 2004, 2005, and 2006, more than 95% of the recorded abductions took place in Mesopotamia (C1), Iraq has lost in significance as a kidnapping location since 2007. In that year, its percentage share in the abduction activities dropped to 88.0% in C1, respectively, 84.1% in C2. In 2008, Iraq lost its leading role for the first time since the beginning of the kidnapping wave. In C1, its share in total kidnappings lowered to 50.0%, in C2 even to 16.7%. Figure 2 makes clear, that the drop of the ‘kidnapping industry’ in Iraq, once “a signature of post-war Iraqi terrorism” [13] was the decisive factor for the general decline of acts of hostage taking in 2008. The main reason for this development can be found in the improvement of the security situation in Mesopotamia (particularly the weakening of radical Islamist groups like Ansar al-Islam and Al-Qaeda in Iraq. These two groups were – as we will see below – most often responsible for this type of crime).

#### *Fate and Gender of Hostages*

Most media-oriented kidnappings ended with the death of at least one hostage. In 93 (86.9%) out of 107 kidnappings in C2, one or several abductees lost their lives. In only nine acts of hostage taking (8.41%), all captured victims regained their freedom; in the remaining five (4.7%) cases, the fate of at least one captive was left unknown. 273 (73.2%) of the 373 hostages were killed, 79 (21.2%) were freed while the fate of 21 others (5.6%) remains unknown. The low number of unknown outcomes indicates that abductors seem to think that it is more useful to inform the world about the ending of a kidnapping operation than to generate psychological pressure by creating suspense. The main cause of death for hostages was execution at the hands of their kidnappers. All 273 fatalities in C2 [14] were caused by execution. Abductions with fatalities (C1), were – evidently – characterized by an even higher percentage of killed victims: 456 (83.7%) abductees lost their lives, 70 (12.8%) were freed, the fate of 19 (3.5%) remained unknown. Shooting was the most prevalent execution method: 267 (59.2%) of the 451 executed hostages (C1) were shot by their captors, 72

(16.0%) were beheaded (though this killing method gained by far the biggest media attention), three of the victims (0.7%) were doused with kerosene and burned alive.

If one analyzes the gender of abductees, one can see that men were much more often kidnapped than women. Less than 8 percent of the abduction victims (C1: 5.1%, C2: 7.8%) were female, whereas the bulk of abductees was male (C1: 94.9%, C2: 92.2%). On top of that, the death rate of male hostages was much higher than that of female victims. More than three-fourths of the kidnapped men (C1: 86.3%, C2: 77.6%) lost their lives. In contrast, “only” 35.7% of the women recorded in C1 and 20.7% in C2 were killed. This noticeable difference can be most likely attributed to moral, cultural and religious restraints. The abduction and killing of women is considered un-Islamic in the Muslim world and has thus been proven counterproductive for a successful media campaign by insurgents. During a mass kidnapping of 23 South Koreans in 2007, the Afghan Taliban were heavily criticized because 16 of their victims were female. According to media reports, the Taliban leadership was “unhappy at the kidnapping of women by their fighters”. [15]

#### *Nationality of Victims*

If we combine both data sets, state residents from not fewer than 31 nations became victims of abductions. Western mainstream media reports have suggested that inhabitants of countries that provided troops for the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan were mainly affected by kidnappings. However, an examination of media-oriented hostage takings offers a different picture:

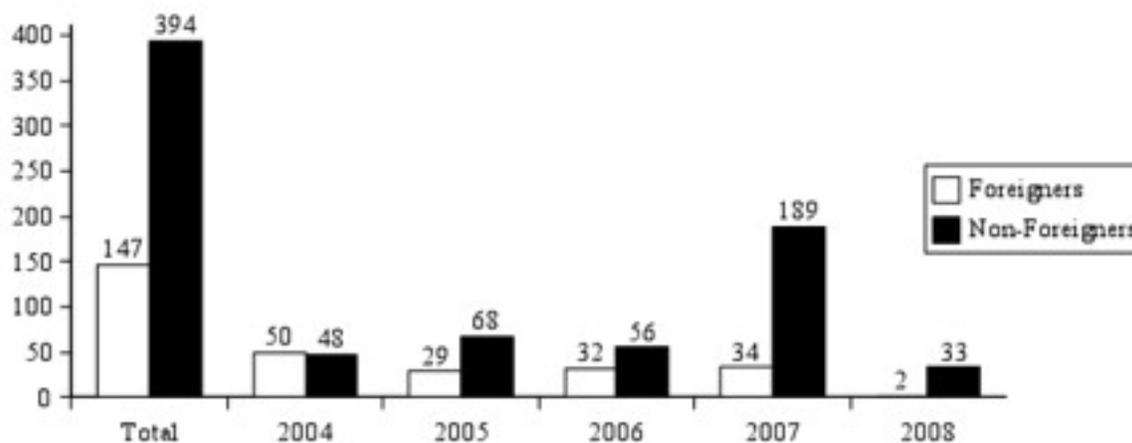
- First, citizens from the three countries in armed conflict - Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan - were the main targets of abductors. More than three-fourths (C1: 72.1%, C2: 76.4%) of the victims came from these three conflict-ridden countries.
- Second, citizens from countries who had no military presence in Iraq were often targeted. Nepalese, for example, became the fourth frequent target of kidnappers in C1.
- Third, residents from countries who provided a high amount of troops for the military engagement in Iraq and/or Afghanistan (for example, the Netherlands or Georgia) were not targeted at all.

What speaks against the hypothesis that there is a heightened victimization of coalition nationals is the fact that the death rate of captives from coalition countries is markedly lower than that of hostages from non-coalition nations. While 56.0% (C1), respectively, 27.8% (C2) of the abductees whose origin was a coalition country lost their lives, a much higher number of hostages from non-coalition nations was killed (C1: 97.7%, C2: 69.2%).

If we categorize hostages as foreigners and non-foreigners and examine the victimization patterns year-by-year, one notes that the targeting patterns have shifted to locals since 2005. In the figure below, a ‘foreign’ refers to a person kidnapped in a nation other than his or her

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home country. Whereas in 2004, the number of foreign and non-foreign hostages was roughly equal (foreigners: 51.0%, non-foreigners: 49.0%), since 2005, the amount of local hostages has increased (C1). Figure 3 shows that the imbalance between foreigners and non-foreigners was especially great in 2007 and 2008: In 2007, the number of local residents was 5.6 (C1), respectively, 4.7 (C2) times higher than that of the non-domestic captives, in 2008, it was even 16.5 (C1), respectively, 6.3 (C2) times higher.



**Figure 3: Year-by-Year Ratio of Foreign and Non-Foreign Abductees 2004-2008 (C1)**

The increasing amount of domestic abduction victims signals a change of strategy by insurgents/terrorists - their targeting patterns have shifted from the 'far enemy' to the 'near enemy'. The strengthening of the security services in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as Pakistan's supporting role in the war on terrorism have created a situation where "hunting down armed 'collaborators' has become one of the armed oppositions' primary concerns" [16]. The militants' harsh crack-down against local residents is also mirrored by the death rate of their victims: While 68.0% of the foreigners in C1 and 38.1% in C2 were killed, a significantly higher amount of locals lost their lives (C1: 89.6%, C2: 83.7%). The high death rate of domestic kidnap victims indicates that such kidnappings of non-foreigners primary serve the purpose of psychological warfare - local inhabitants of conflict zones are dissuaded from supporting the 'apostates' and 'crusaders'.

#### *Profession of Hostages*

Around half of the abductees worked in the security sector (C1: 47.5%, C2: 50.9%). Here, persons with a military or paramilitary background were most often targeted (C1: 25.1%, C2: 28.7%). Civilians who worked for the government were the second most victimized professional category (C1: 17.4%, C2: 19.3%). The bulk of them (roughly 95% in both data sets) performed security tasks (police, building protection etc.). Private security contractors were the fourth (C1: 5.7%), respectively, fifth most (4.0%) targeted occupational group. There are two obvious reasons for the above-average victimization of security professionals:

- First, security forces are fighting directly against the insurgents and are therefore considered enemies by them.
- Second, most of the abduction victims who worked in the security sector were assigned to tasks that – on a more or less regular basis – required direct enemy contact that exposed them to a higher abduction risk.

The higher percentage of security professionals in C2 is a further sign for a strategy changing towards the ‘near enemy’ as most of the victims from this occupational group were non-foreigners. Not only the targeting patterns but also the death rate of abductees reflect the fact that members of security organizations and government employees are treated by the insurgents as enemies. More than four-fifths (C1: 87.6%, C2: 83.1%) of the hostages linked to a military or paramilitary entity, lost their lives. Yet the death rate of government employees was even higher. All abductees in C1 and 98.6% in C2 were killed during their captivity. On the other hand, the death rate of professionals belonging to the private security sector firms was markedly lower (C1: 74.2%, C2: 73.3%). Among other factors, this might have been caused by the fact that many of them were foreigners – a status which made them more interesting for financially motivated kidnappers.

In an earlier study on kidnappings in Iraq (covering the period April to August 2004), Thomas Hegghammer had noticed a “clear dominance of drivers and manual workers” [17] among the victims. This study reaches similar findings: In C1, drivers were the third, workers the fourth most often targeted professional group. However, in C2, their significance decreased (drivers: from 8.4% in C1 to 3.2% in C2; workers: from 6.8% in C1 to 1.61% in C2). These findings which can also be observed in regards to other professional groups were probably not only caused by the different approaches of both data sets, but might also be a further indicator for a heightened victimization of the ‘near enemy’: While Iraqi abductors in 2004 eagerly tried to deter foreign nations from providing helpers for the reconstruction, since 2005, their interests have shifted to the ‘near enemy’, especially the domestic security forces.

#### *Organizational Membership of Abductors*

As most kidnapping incidents in our four countries study took place in Iraq, it is not surprising that the bulk of hostage takings in both samples (C1: 94.0%, C2: 85.0%) was conducted by militant organizations active there. Insurgent groups claiming abductions can be dichotomously categorized in regularly and singularly active organizations. The first category consists of established militant groups which regularly claim attacks over a longer period of time. Their modus operandi is not restricted to hostage takings but rather encompasses a much broader spectrum of different terrorist and/or guerrilla tactics. The second category comprises organizations who surface only once or a few times. Usually, they claim just a single operation – mostly a kidnapping – and are not heard of again. Only in exceptional cases, they conduct one or two more abductions. Experts suppose that many of those mayflies, in fact, are brigades of established organizations who do not want to use their

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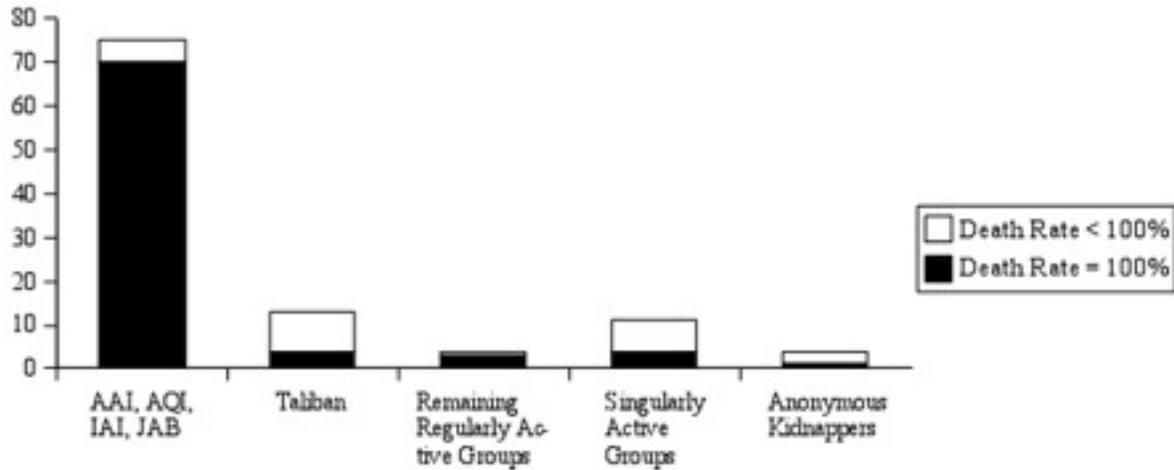
‘company name’ for strategic reasons. Most radical Islamist groups, for example, avoid openly demanding ransom money because asking for material goods is deemed un-Islamic in their salafist interpretation of Islam. In C1, 14 militant organizations who claimed kidnappings belonged to the first category, 16 to the latter. In C2, 12 insurgent groups could be assigned to the first category, 11 to the second. All organizations belonging to the category of singularly active organizations were based in Iraq.

Both data sets contained abductions in which the captors did not reveal any organizational affiliation. The low frequency of such cases (C1: 1.6%, C2: 3.7%) indicates that hostage takers are anxious to operate under a group name (even if it is not a common one like in the case of singularly active organizations). This conduct is probably part of the perpetrators' media strategy: As terrorism is a communication strategy, a terrorist attack is generally only successful if it becomes known who has conducted it (except in certain ‘false flag’ operations). Besides, the perpetrators' identification heightens the possibility that a terrorist attack is newsworthy because the mainstream media are more willing to report on an act of terrorism if the militants' affiliation is known. [18] In the category of the regularly active groups, the bulk of abductions (C1: 79.8%, C2: 70.0%) was claimed by only four militant organizations – all based in Iraq: Ansar al-Islam (AAI), Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Jaish Abu Bakr al-Siddiq al-Salafi (JAB) and Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI). The fact, that the three first mentioned groups are radical Islamist organizations, implicates that media-oriented kidnappings are the strategy of choice for groups with a radical Islamist ideology. The national Islamist IAI, had once been the organization of the national Islamist camp whose ideology was similar to AQI's. In recent years, growing rifts between radical and national Islamist organizations have led to a situation where formerly co-operating groups have grown apart in terms of ideology. This development was also mirrored in their kidnapping activities: While the IAI claimed a total of 6 kidnappings with fatalities in the years 2004 and 2005, it assumed responsibility for only one abduction per year in 2006 and 2007. It did not claim a single kidnapping in 2008.

Among the four Iraqi groups primary responsible for kidnapping activities, AAI and AQI dominated. Together they claimed 71.6% of the abductions in C1 and 64.5% of those in C2. Albeit AQI got the biggest media attention, it was in fact AAI that was responsible for most of the media-oriented abductions (C1: AAI: 43.7% vs. AQI: 27.9%; C2: AAI: 41.1% vs AQI: 23.4%). A comparison between C1 and C2 reveals a rise of kidnappings by the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban (C1: 5.5% vs. C2: 12.2%). The increased percentage cannot be explained by the differences between C1 and C2 alone, but can certainly also be attributed to the strengthening of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban which triggered a growing number of abductions in both countries. All the other regularly active groups had only a marginal share in kidnapping activities (C1: 3.8%, C2: 3.7%). The singularly active groups also played only a secondary role. Roughly one-tenth of the recorded kidnappings (C1: 9.3%, C2: 10.3%) were claimed by them.

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The organizational affiliation of the captors did not only decisively influence the frequency but also the outcome of abductions (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Outcome of Hostage Takings by Organizational Categories 2006-2008 (C2)**

For example, nearly all kidnappings (C1: 93.8%, C2: 93.3%), which were conducted by AAI, AQI, JAB and IAI ended with the death of all abductees. If we relate the death rate to the high activity level of these groups, it becomes evident why abductions in Iraq are characterized by a very high ratio of fatalities. People who fell in the hands of the Taliban had a markedly higher chance of survival than captives of AAI, AQI, JAB and IAI: 50.0% of the Taliban kidnappings in C1 and 30.8% in C2 ended with the death of all abductees. The differing fatalities ratio of both organizational categories is probably rooted in the different demand strategies of the two groups: While AAI, AQI and IAI made disproportionate demands (like a complete withdrawal of troops from the country), the Taliban bargained for more ‘reasonable’ concessions (like a prisoner exchange). For Iraqi radical Islamists, making demands was often only a matter of form whereas their true motivation was exercising psychological pressure. JAB did not raise any demands at all – which implies that their hostage takings were exclusively driven by psychological warfare considerations. On the other hand, the Taliban did not only try to influence their target audience psychologically, but also aimed at extorting concrete concessions (especially when kidnappings involved foreigners).

If one analyzes the influence of the organizational membership, two more aspects are striking:

- The method of killing: For example, AAI, AQI, JAB, IAI and the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban claimed 91.7% of all hostage decapitations. AQI beheaded most captives (30.6%) closely followed by AAI (27.8%). It appears that decapitations are the strategy of choice for radical Islamist organizations while groups with a more

moderate Islamist or secular ideology refrain from this archaic and cruel execution method.

- The duration of kidnappings: For instance, Taliban kidnappings lasted markedly longer than abductions by AAI, AQI, JAB and IAI (C1: 35.7 days vs. 9.2 days, C2: 39.1 days vs. 6.8 days). This is a further indicator that the Taliban are more anxious to extort reasonable concessions than their Iraqi brethren whose main motivation consists in psychological warfare and who are therefore less interested in time-consuming negotiations.

### *Demands*

With regards to demands, it has to be pointed out that their analysis was more problematic than that of most other data categories; more than three-fourths of the recorded demands could not be classified unambiguously. In 82.6% of the cases in C1, the captors did not publicly make any demands for the release of their victims. In C2, the perpetrators abstained in 75.7% from demanding any concessions. Theoretically, abductors can refrain from raising demands for two reasons (however, merely on the basis of open source information, it cannot be said which one is more true):

- The captors are not interested in negotiations: This is the typical setting of psychological-warfare motivated hostage takings. Those are lacking the element of demands which is otherwise stereotypically associated with 'classical' hostage situations. Instead of extorting a concrete entity (for example, a government), the captors try to influence a collective (the public) – i.e. a larger, less-specified target group; they want to influence that group psychologically to achieve a certain result such as increase public pressure to withdraw from coalition warfare. In the absence of negotiations, the hostage does not function as a 'bargaining chip'.
- The demands are conveyed in secret: many countries officially adhere to a strict no-ransom policy (i.e. they do not make any concessions to kidnappers). However, in spite of the official 'no negotiations, no concessions' declaratory policy, a number of hard-line governments have engaged in several unofficial deals. In order to avoid undermining the credibility of a country's official policy, such deals are usually made in secret and denied in public.

If we analyze hostage takings with regards to the nature of demands, we notice a significant dominance of cases with solely political demands (C1: 90.3%, C2: 76.9%). Cases, during which the captors brought forward exclusively financial demands, were either absent (C1) or played a subordinate role (C2: 7.7%). Hostage takings with a combination of political and financial demands were rare too (C1: 9.7%, C2: 15.4%). These findings indicate that abductors apparently refrain from explicitly demanding money. However, it is safe to assume that the actual percentage of financially motivated kidnappings is higher - the nature of public demands does not always reveal the kidnappers' true motivations. For example, hostage

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takers with financial aims can pretend political demands to raise the pressure, or politically motivated kidnappers accept a ransom payment if they realize that their extortion attempt will not lead to accepting their political demands.

Among the political demands, the most frequent single demand was a prisoner release (C1: 38.1%, C2: 39.7%). The second most frequently made demand was for the withdrawal of troops from a town, a region, or a country (C1: 23.8%, C2: 15.9%). With regards to financial demands, kidnappers either requested a ransom (C1: 3.2%, C2: 9.5%) or asked for a compensation money for human and material losses caused by military operations (C1: 1.6%). However, the latter demand was only raised once.

### *Hostage and Execution Videos*

Hostage videos are the most prevalent type of publications in media-oriented hostage takings (C1: 78.8%, C2: 72.1%). Other types of exposure (i.e. images of the captives or their ID-cards as well as audio statements) played only a secondary role (C1: 21.2%, C2: 28.0%). In 130 (73.0%) of the 178 hostage takings recorded in C1, the captors broadcasted video footage. During those kidnappings, 187 hostage videos were released – an average of 1.5 videos per abduction. In 71 (66.4%) of the 107 kidnappings recorded in C2, the captors published video footage. In those cases, 99 hostage videos were released – on average 1.4 videos per kidnapping. The average run-time of the tapes was 6.3 minutes in C1, and 8.0 minutes in C2, respectively. The longer average run-time in C2 was influenced by the fact, that since 2006, captors have released longer lasting compilation videos lasting between 24 and 63 minutes.

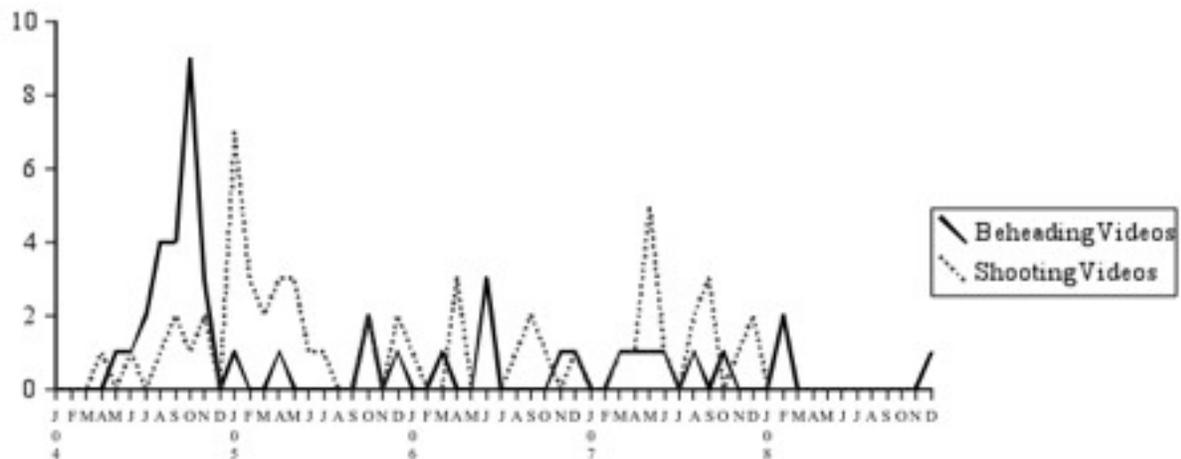
A sub-classification of the recorded hostage videos reveals that execution videos and ‘classical’ hostage videos (i.e. tapes which show the captive alive serving as a proof-of-life or as a mouth piece for publicizing demands) were the most frequent type of hostage footage. 52.4% of the videos recorded in C1 were execution videos, 36.4% were ‘classical’ hostage videos. Conversely, in C2, ‘classical’ hostage videos had the biggest share in video publications (51.5%), whereas execution videos here made up only the second-largest sub-category (36.4%). While the differing methodical approaches (only kidnappings with fatalities vs. abductions with all types of outcome) certainly contributed to the quantitative differences between C1 and C2, those disparities can also be attributed to a general decline of execution videos due to changing ‘PR’ considerations of the kidnappers. Other types of hostage videos (for example, post-mortem tapes showing captives after execution) played only a marginal role. Together, they made up only around ten percent of all video publications (C1 and C2). The popularity of ‘classical’ hostage videos and execution footage can be attributed to several advantages perceived by the kidnappers:

- **Credibility:** Hostage videos serve to provide a proof-of-life and evidence that a group is indeed responsible for a kidnapping and holding the victim in captivity. Execution

videos are a macabre perversion of proof-of-life as they prove that the victim was indeed killed by the captors.

- *Emotionalization*: Hostage and execution videos enable the audience to get a picture of a captive's physical and psychological situation. As the footage documents the victim's fear and agony, it is also used to create compassion in one or more target groups, who can thereby be induced to apply political pressure (e.g. appeals to government) and thereby influence the political process (reduce sympathy for an acting government, calls for a troop withdrawal from a conflict zone, etc.)
- *Newsworthiness*: Hostage footage tends to get extraordinary media coverage. Kidnappings involve life-and-death situations where the outcome is in the balance and sectors of the public identify either with the victim or (more rarely) with the terrorist. The combination of "human interest", conflict and drama often proves irresistible for media, especially commercial ones, wishing to attract and hold audiences.
- *Psychological warfare*: Hostage videos demonstrate the power of the abductors to exert total control on their defenseless captives; by displaying the helplessness of the victim they enhance public fear of the perpetrators thus adding weight to their threats and demands. Execution videos are the embodiment of a 'theater of terror' and create maximum shock value. However, they also create feelings of revenge.

If we sub-categorize execution videos, we can see that videos involving killing by gunfire were the most frequent type of execution footage (54.8%). Beheading videos accounted for 42.3%. Beheadings are more frequently media-transmitted than shootings: While only 16.0% of all hostage executions were beheadings, decapitation videos made up 42.3% of the recorded execution tapes. On the other hand, the percentage of shootings was higher than that of shooting videos (59.2% vs. 54.8%). Nevertheless, the controversial effect of execution footage (especially beheading scenes) has caused the insurgents to rethink the use of such cruel footage as an instrument in their war of 'nerves'. The fear of losing part of their constituency is evident from internal and public directives by Jihadist ideologues (for example, Ayman al-Zawahiri). There have also been heated discussions in Jihadist forums on the Internet. As a result, there has been a sharp decrease of execution videos.



**Figure 5: Beheading vs. Shooting Videos 2004-2008 (C1)**

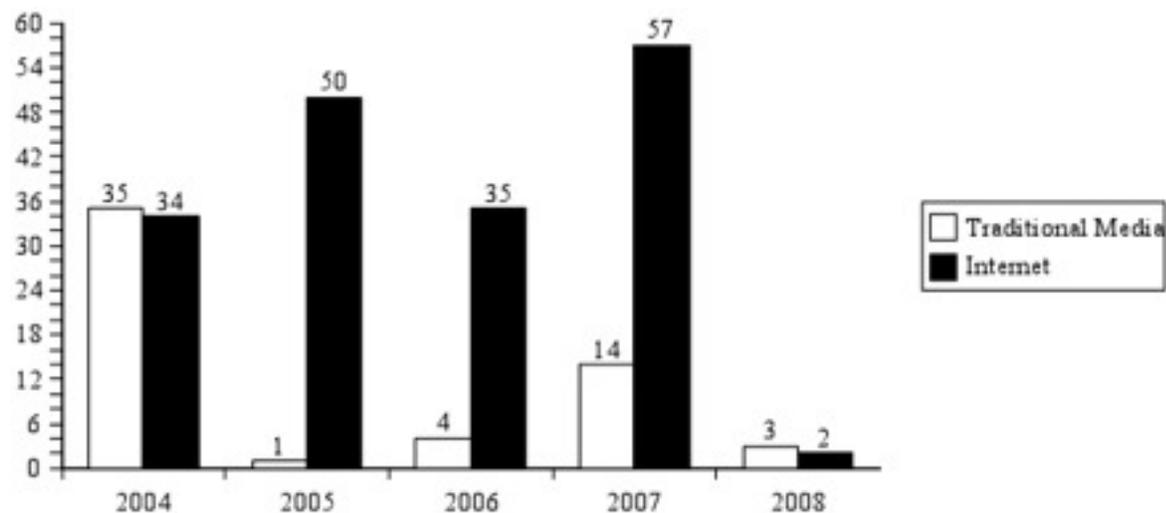
With regards to decapitation footage, changes in the public release patterns could already be observed in the period between summer 2004 and summer 2005. Figure 5 visualizes that during the first Iraqi kidnapping peak in autumn 2004, kidnappers mainly published beheading videos. However, in the course of the next abduction peak in early 2005, this distribution almost inverted: shooting videos became the most prevalent type of execution videos.

#### *Publication Channel for Hostage-related Media Products*

If we have a look at the publication outlets kidnappers used for the distribution of their footage, a clear preference for the Internet can be seen. Around three-fourths of the recorded hostage media were distributed online (C1: 75.4%, C2: 73.5%), whereas only a quarter was disseminated via traditional media channels (for example, the Qatar broadcasting company Al-Jazeera). The reasons for the popularity of the Internet are obvious. They are rooted in several advantages for both militants and their sympathizers: first, and foremost, the versatile applications (propaganda, publicity, psychological warfare, fund-raising, recruitment, etc.) but also in more general advantages (amongst them: independence from time and location, multimedia environment, independence from editorial control or censorship by official media, possibility of quick and anonymous communication). Together, they make the Internet an ideal platform for terrorist threat- and violence-based communications.

Figure 6 makes clear that the Internet did not gain its leading role right from the beginning of the Iraqi kidnapping campaign; it reached its full potential only with some delay. However, after a long-term preference for the use of the Internet we see that traditional media re-gained some of their initial significance in 2008. This might have to do with the kidnappers' organizational affiliation. The highly active Iraqi radical Islamist groups (AAI, AQI, JAB and IAI) made strongest use of the Internet. 89.5% of their media-oriented publications recorded

in C1 were disseminated online; in C2, these four Iraqi groups even used the Internet to the exclusion of other channels. In contrast, the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban passed the bulk of their media footage to traditional media outlets (for example, the Pakistani news station GEO TV). This can be partly attributed to the fact that the Taliban's media skills ARE still behind those of Iraqi insurgent groups – even though it has made considerable progress in recent years due to the influence of their more Internet-savvy sister organizations (especially Al-Qaeda Central and AQI).



**Figure 6: Publication Channel for Hostage Media: Year-by-Year Comparison 2004-2008 (C1)**

A year-by-year comparison of online and traditional publications reveals three characteristic patterns, apparently determined by organizational specifics:

- 2004: Gradual unfolding of the AAI/AQI/IAI [19] media campaign / maneuvering between online and traditional publications: The three most Internet-savvy Iraqi insurgent groups, responsible for the bulk of media-oriented hostage takings, did not start their media campaigns at the same time. Only by August 2004, all three organizations regularly published hostage media. Besides, in their 'experimental phase', AAI, AQI and IAI disseminated their materials through different channels (probably to examine the media effect). Execution videos were mainly distributed online, while 'classical' hostage tapes were often passed on to traditional media outlets. For example, 83.3% of AQI's execution videos were posted to the Internet, while only 30.0% of their non-bloody footage was released online. In doing so, the kidnappers apparently tried to circumvent any censorship of their cruel footage by the mainstream media.
- 2005/2006: Commitment to the Internet / predominance of online publications: Since February 2005, AAI, AQI, IAI (and since then also JAB) relocated their media

activities exclusively to the Internet. The trend to online publications is probably rooted in the evolution of the insurgents' media campaign strategy. Apparently, the militants came to the conclusion that the Internet is a better instrument for the distribution of terrorist materials than the traditional media.

- 2007/2008: Revival of traditional distribution channels: Increasing kidnapping activities by Afghan and Pakistani insurgents triggered a growing number of hostage media portrayals from the AfPak region. As the AfPak insurgents (especially the Taliban) are less Internet-savvy than their Iraqi counterparts, the traditional media gained back prominence at the expense of the Internet.

The findings indicate that generalizations about Internet usage by terrorists are tricky as practices are decisively influenced by group-specific features.

### ***Conclusion***

By utilizing quantitative methods that allow the identification of concrete numbers and the calculation of percentage shares of media-oriented acts of hostage taking – a terrorist strategy that, with a few exceptions, had only be discussed on the basis of intuitive estimates until now – this study has (at least partially) closed an existing research gap. On the one hand, the analysis provided information about quantitative aspects of the kidnapping activities. For example, the total amount of media-oriented hostage takings (C1: 178, C2: 107), abducted persons (C1: 545, C2: 373), and published hostage videos (C1: 187, C2: 99) could be determined. The long-term tracking of Islamist online presences did not only allow the identification of static values (i.e. total values), it also made possible an analysis of developments over time. For example, it could be shown that in 2008, the number of media-oriented hostage takings has markedly decreased (drop to 0,2 (C1), respectively, 0,5 (C2) kidnappings per month – while the total monthly average was 2.97 kidnappings).

On the other hand, the study offered qualitative insights into the strategy of media-oriented hostage takings. So it became clear that Iraq was the main conflict theatre for abductions (more than 85.0% of the kidnappings recorded in both datasets happened in Mesopotamia), and that Afghanistan and Pakistan have begun to play a growing – though not yet comparable – role. The kidnappers' organizational membership turned out to be the core parameter in the analysis. It decisively affects other factors such as the amount of kidnappings, the likelihood of fatalities, the duration of hostage crises, or the choice of publication channels for hostage-related media footage. When assessing and responding to hostage situations, counter-terrorist policy-makers should therefore give top priority to organizational factors of terrorist groups.

A holistic assessment of the findings of the study makes it necessary to take into account the restrictions of the methodology utilized in this study. First, I have to stress the incompleteness of body of data in database C1. The restriction to hostage takings deemed newsworthy by official and public media (i.e. those with fatalities) stood in the way of an integral view of the phenomenon. A second restriction, which also relates to C2, is the limitation on media-

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oriented hostage takings. Since there are bound to exist discrepancies between the insurgents' PR-oriented propaganda campaign and their actual needs on the physical battlefield, only an additional analysis of non-media-oriented kidnappings – and a comparison between media-oriented and non-media-oriented hostage takings – could guarantee a holistic examination of the activities. In Iraq and Afghanistan, a kidnapping-industry has emerged in recent years; likewise in Pakistan, we can observe an increase in hostage takings. Most of these abductions occur in the shadow zone beyond the scope of the news value system that determines coverage by the mainstream media. A comparison of media-oriented (psychological warfare, political motivation) and non-media-oriented (mainly criminal) abductions would show us in all probability a much larger proportion of financially motivated abductions. This hypothesis is supported by reports on child abductions in Iraq: while in none of the media-oriented kidnappings children were targeted, time and again one can find reports on non-media-oriented, financially motivated abductions, in which Iraqi children were targeted. [20]

A third shortcoming of this study is its limitation to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. To get a fuller picture of media-oriented hostage takings, one should expand the analysis to other regions and also explore supra-regional developments. In addition, a comparison between hostage takings where the location of the victim is not known, and hostage situations where the hostages are holed up in a known location with the hostage takers might also be warranted. Last but not least, the role and quality of official and public media-coverage and the Internet in the contagion of kidnappings and hostage takings ought to be explored.

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## Notes

[1] The full text of the dissertation can be found at: <http://scidok.sulb.uni-saarland.de/volltexte/2010/3117>. [accessed: 10-29-2010]

[2] See Cornelia Glück, 'ETA und die Medien'. In: Sonja Glaab (Ed.) (2007). *Medien und Terrorismus – Auf den Spuren einer symbiotischen Beziehung*. (Wissenschaft & Sicherheit, Vol. 3). Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, p. 22.

[3] The term 'theater of terror' was introduced by Brian Michael Jenkins (1974). *Terrorism and Kidnapping*. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/2006/P5255.pdf>, p. 3. [accessed: 10-29-2010]

[4] Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn (1994). *The theater of terror: mass media and international terrorism*. New York: Longman, p.52.

[5] Ronald D. Crelinsten and Denis Szabo defined hostage taking as "extortion to achieve political, monetary, or psychological goals." – Ronald D. Crelinsten and Denis Szabo (1979). *Hostage-taking*. Lexington: Heath, p. ix.

[6] Minwoo Yun (2007). 'Hostage Taking and Kidnapping in Terrorism: Predicting the Fate of a Hostage'. *Professional Issues in Criminal Justice*, Vol. 2, Issue. 1, p. 23.

[7] The author will provide the tables to interested readers upon request

[8] See, for example, David Th. Schiller (2007): 'When it bleeds, it leads the headlines....' Ein Essay zum Thema 'Medien und Terrorismus' aus journalistischer und sicherheitspolitischer Perspektive. In: Sonja Glaab (Ed.) (2007). *Medien und Terrorismus – Auf den Spuren einer symbiotischen Beziehung*. (Wissenschaft & Sicherheit, Vol. 3). Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, p. 101, or Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn (1994), op. cit., p. 128.

[9] See, for example, Michael Eisenstadt and Jeffrey White (2006). 'Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency'. *Military Review*, Vol. 86, Issue 3, p. 41; Norman Antokol and Mayer Nudell (1990). 'No one a neutral: political hostage-taking in the modern world'. Medina: Alpha Publications of Ohio, p. 163, or Thomas Hegghammer. (2004). 'The Iraqi Hostage Crisis: abductions in Iraq, April-August 2004'. FFI/RAPPORT-2004/03105. <http://rapporter.ffi.no/rapporter/2004/03105.pdf>, p. 15. [accessed: 10-29-2010]

[10] Idem, p. 9.

[11] See Michael Eisenstadt and Jeffrey White (2006), op. cit., p. 40.

[12] Due to a lack of background information, an exact classification by country was not possible.

[13] Kasun Ubayasiri (2004). 'Virtual hostage dramas and real politics'. *Ejournalist*, Vol. 4, Issue. 2, p. 1. <http://ejournalist.com.au/v4n2/ubayasiri.pdf>. [accessed: 10-29-2010]

[14] In one case, the kidnapers stated that their victim, a British national, had committed suicide. But later it was revealed that, in fact, the man was killed by his captors.

[15] Emal Pashtunyar (2007). 'Taliban Leadership Angry Over Kidnapping Women'. *Korea Times*, 16 August, 2007; [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2007/08/116\\_8475.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2007/08/116_8475.html). [accessed: 10-29-2010, link expired]

[16] International Crisis Group (2006). 'In Their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency'. Middle East Report N°50. 15 February 2006; [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle\\_east\\_\\_\\_north\\_africa/iraq\\_iran\\_gulf/50\\_in\\_their\\_own\\_words\\_reading\\_the\\_iraqi\\_insurgency.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east___north_africa/iraq_iran_gulf/50_in_their_own_words_reading_the_iraqi_insurgency.pdf), p. 24. [accessed: 10-29-2010]

[17] Thomas Hegghammer, op. cit., p. 20. [accessed: 10-29-2010]

[18] Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn, op. cit., p. 128.

[19] JAB claimed only two hostage takings in 2004; as its influence on overall kidnapping activities was only marginal, it was not considered in this examination.

[20] See, for example: Gerry J. Gilmore (2008). 'Terror Tactics Backfire on Al Qaeda in Iraq, Colonel Says'. (American Forces Press Service, February 06, 2008). <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=48878> or AFP (2009): 'Iraqi boy rescued from abductors after 70 days'. (Google News, June 06, 2009). [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hxYB9QPW\\_93x8RJ3cp1ZTj9G3yRQ](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hxYB9QPW_93x8RJ3cp1ZTj9G3yRQ). [accessed: 10-29-2010]

## Zachary Chesser: an American, Grassroots Jihadist Strategist on Raising the Next Generation of Al-Qaeda Supporters

by Christopher Anzalone

### *Abstract*

*Zachary Chesser (alias Abu Talhah al-Amrikee), a prolific 20-year-old online jihadist pundit, was arrested on 21 July 2010 for allegedly attempting to join the Somali jihadist group Al-Shabab. Before his arrest, Chesser produced numerous analytical and strategic writings aimed at ensuring that the transnational jihadist movement represented by Al-Qaeda's Senior Leadership (AQSL) continues to exist beyond the present generation. In his last major essay, Chesser attempted to develop and propose a grassroot-based, inclusive approach toward jihadist recruitment, drawing upon the writings of prominent jihadists such as Yusuf al-Uyairi. It remains unclear as to whether Chesser is representative of a new breed of American jihadist pundit-operatives.*

Zachary Chesser, the 20-year-old Virginia man best known for issuing thinly-veiled threats to the creators of the Comedy Central TV show *South Park* earlier this year, was a prolific writer and self-styled grassroots jihadist strategist. He was a regular poster on several major jihadist Internet forums, including *Al-Qimmah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic Summit), a Somali-English-Arabic forum dedicated to covering the activities of the Somali jihadist group Al-Shabab. It is this group that Chesser was accused by US authorities of attempting to join. He signed his online writings with his *nom de guerre* Abu Talhah al-Amrikee, which combines the name of a prominent historical companion of the Prophet Muhammad with the geographical marker “American.”[1] An advocate of a grassroots approach to recruitment and propaganda, Chesser was remarkably willing to engage with intellectual opponents (such as Al-Qaeda specialist Jarret Brachman) in debates on a variety of issues concerning the present state of the transnational jihadist movement represented by Al-Qaeda's Senior Leadership (AQSL) in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and its regional affiliates and allies.[2] He was also a voracious reader of counter-terrorism websites and writings by various academic specialists and analysts.

It is clear from Chesser's work that he considers himself a militant intellectual, a grassroots missionary dedicated to propagating the transnational jihadist cause as he interprets it. In his last major strategic essay – a 25-page piece entitled *Raising Al-Qaeda: A Look into the Long Term Obligations of the Global Jihad Movement* – Chesser sought to formulate a long-term plan to ensure that the transnational jihadist ideology he supported survives and is even strengthened in future generations. In the essay, published on jihadist and file-sharing websites during the first week of July this year, Chesser combined past writings by other, more influential jihadist intellectuals with his own original analyses, before making “recommendations” for transnational jihadists to consider.

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Given Chesser's prolific writing and widespread militant activism that turned into several – albeit failed – attempts to link up with Al-Shabab, it is well worth considering *Raising Al-Qaeda* in more detail. In addition, his responses in his last (written) interview before his arrest in late July by the FBI and an online conversation with this author shed additional light onto Chesser, one of the most prevalent cyber jihadist writers in English in recent memory.

### *Legitimacy and Necessity*

Chesser begins the essay by writing that the “allure” of jihadist militancy has reached a height greater than any seen before in the “last one hundred years”. This “allure”, he writes, “has become so enamouring that even disbelieving parents of disbelieving children are worried about their offspring going off to die for the sake of God”. Despite this positive development, Chesser argues that a long-term strategy that will ensure the “longevity” of the transnational jihadist movement is still needed. One of the key ways to ensure that AQSL's ideology will last, is to “normalise” in the mind of Muslims the legitimacy and necessity of fighting non-Muslims and their Muslim (apostate) allies. These groups are enemies of Muslims, he says, and are actively engaged in the oppression and the killing of Muslims around the world. Why then, Chesser asks, should Muslims feel hesitant or guilty about fighting them?

Significantly, Chesser does not limit the scope of his argument to the minority of Muslims who support Al-Qaeda senior leadership and like-minded groups. Rather, he seeks to develop an inclusive strategy that will encompass all Muslims, a goal that he develops further in later sections of the essay. Referencing the concept of “true” Muslims as “strangers” (*Al-Ghuraba'*) found in *hadith* literature and classical and medieval Muslim religious writings [3], Chesser writes: “The Prophet (Muhammad) told us that *al-Ghuraba'* are a blessed people, but the implications of this *hadith* was not for us to instil strangeness in the regular acts of worship. Rather, we should seek to create an entire nation of *Ghuraba'*... We must seek to remove the status of the *Ghuraba'* being a group among the Muslims, and shift it to being a group known as the ‘Muslims’ among the entire of humanity.” In short, Chesser seeks to move the vast majority of the world's Muslims from opposition or neutrality toward the transnational jihadist movement to active support.

He argues that a “plurality” of Muslims is “moustache only”. They have “abandoned jihad (struggle) in God's cause” and are Muslim in name only. Chesser is divided over whether or not to target this group of Muslims for recruitment. On the one hand, he writes that “it is not particularly beneficial to target them in trying to recruit mujahideen”. Yet he continues: “However, this group has a plurality among men in this *Ummah* (worldwide Muslim community), so it cannot be outright ignored.” Chesser ultimately hopes to woo this group of Muslims into becoming “mildly supportive” or at least “indifferent” to the transnational jihadist movement. In other words, he seeks to move them away from their current opposition to the

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movement, though he is not overly optimistic about the chances of this group becoming energetic supporters.

One of the best ways to win over this group, Chesser suggests, is to convince them of the worldly benefits that they will enjoy from their support of groups such as Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabab. The reason for this is that “moustache only” Muslims are concerned with this world rather than the afterlife. Thus, they are more likely to be won over by promises of worldly material gain. He identifies Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as a prime example of a transnational jihadist group that has put this strategy into practice, pointing out their relations with Yemen’s discontented tribes. Targeting marginal Muslims is vital in order to smooth the path for the younger generation to actively participate in AQSL’s campaign. This is the case, Chesser argues, because “the most important group to target is the group which is most beneficial to the jihad, and that is young men. However, it is much easier for one to come to terms with leaving for jihad when one’s parents are supportive, or at least not reprehensive regarding the matter”.

### *Revitalisation*

The second section of Chesser’s essay is dedicated to a discussion of how to revitalise jihadist missionary activity, with a particular emphasis on Muslim women. Referring to them as “the forgotten fifty percent”, he writes: “It is very sad to see the lack of material which is directly targeting the sisters of our *Ummah* from the *mujahidin* [sic] and their supporters [because]... the encouraging words of a mother, a sister, or a wife are far more powerful than the encouragement one receives from their brothers.” Citing famous historical supporters of jihad, such as the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period elegiac poetess al-Khansa’, Chesser urges jihadists to “seriously target our sisters in the *da’wa* (missionary work)”.

One of the best ways to increase the number of Muslim women who support the transnational jihadist movement is to ensure that their contributions are recognised publicly. Chesser argues: “A lot of sisters [Muslim women] are very involved in the support of the mujahideen, but their efforts go unmentioned, so other sisters do not have anything to look forward to from what they know.” Chesser’s argument that “pious”, as he defines it, Muslim women are the primary raisers of future jihadists is not particularly revolutionary in the wider field of transnational jihadist literature. In fact, his arguments are largely rehashed from views expressed by exponentially more influential jihadist figures including the late founder of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, Yusuf al-Uyairi. Al-Uyairi, who was killed in 2003 by Saudi security forces, wrote an influential treatise in 2000 on the topic of women in jihad entitled *Women’s Role in Fighting the Enemies*. Similar views about female participation in AQSL’s jihad were also expressed in a December 2009 letter addressed “to the Muslim sisters”, authored by ‘Umaymah al-Zawahiri, the wife of Al-Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. [4]

### *Raising Al-Qaeda*

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The core of Chesser's essay is dedicated to explaining his strategy on how best to "Raise Al-Qaeda"; that is, how to rear future generations of jihadists. At the core of his strategy is instilling a "love" of jihad among Muslim youth and removing their doubts and fears of it. Muslim youth, he argues, must be raised with a clear understanding of the requirement of jihad and should have a sincere and overwhelming desire to participate in it. They must be made to understand that it is through jihad that oppressed Muslims around the world are best defended from "Crusaders, Zionists, and apostate Muslims".

Interestingly, Chesser sees the United States as a model to emulate with regard to how best to run a domestic propaganda campaign. He writes that this is because the US has historically been adept at instilling a sense of blind patriotism in the majority of its citizens, thus ensuring that any form of dissent from the government's line is seen as a kind of "treason". He contradicts himself on this point, however. While he is highly critical of this type of indoctrination, at the same time he argues that it is a practice worthy of emulation by jihadists because it will enable them to train a new generation of Al-Qaeda foot soldiers. He writes: "While we might currently be at war with America, this does not stop us from looking into the success they had in building their ideology and learning from it. America has built a culture which is blindly patriotic and rallies behind empty words and loaded terms with a ferocity that is unrivalled in the modern world." Similarly, jihadists need to work hard to instil a sense of "patriotism" in their children. They can do this by creating an environment that embraces AQSL's definition of jihad, though presumably (and Chesser is not clear on this point) jihadists would not duplicate the "empty" sloganeering that he accuses the US of having used throughout history.

One of the key obstacles to the normalisation of jihad in the minds of future generations of Muslims is its "over-analysis," according to Chesser. What is needed, he argues, is a simplification of the topic so that those Muslims who "hide behind" technicalities and obscure academic debates will no longer be able to "confuse" Muslim youth about the religious obligation to participate in jihad. He writes: "We need to raise our children with the understanding that there is a time for peace and a time for war. We need to raise them knowing that there is a time for mercy and a time to kill. They cannot have hesitation in either matter, and the matters are not complicated. Islam is very clear on the matter, so it should not be hard to make this a foundation of a child's understanding." Chesser's philistine pronouncements are disproven by the sheer volume of Muslim juridical writings on jihad and its many types.

In order to eradicate the problem of "over-analysing" jihad by future generations of Muslims, Chesser argues that Muslim youth need to be taught about the issues related to jihad from an early age, including the differences between defensive and offensive jihad, the appropriate distribution of war spoils, and the jurisprudence of jihad. In order to connect today's youth to their history, they should be educated about the illustrious military career of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, the *Sahaba*, just as many children in the US are taught about

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the great military leaders and battles of American own history. Young children should be encouraged to emulate great historical Muslim military leaders and play martial games with toy weapons in order to “normalise” the notion of participating in military activities. Older children and young adults should be trained in the use of real weapons such as hunting rifles and bows. Games such as laser tag and paintball, he writes, will also be useful in beginning to train Muslim youth to be warriors.

### *Reforming jihadist media*

Jihadist media and education, Chesser argues, should not simply be a top-down process. Rather, it should be transformed into a grassroots, bottom-up movement. The fruits of this approach will be an increase in domestic jihadist recruitment in the US, Canada and Europe. He writes: “It is this shift which is occurring in the West and has led to the surge in ‘homegrown’ attacks on American soil.” In order to ensure that this shift continues, it is necessary to target all potential groups of recruits rather than being elitist with regard to media production and targeting. Chesser notes: “One of the things the media outlets of the *mujahidin* [sic] really need to consider is the longevity of their methods... Our media has to demonstrate a platform and the benefits of victory and resistance. Additionally, if we do not begin to target audiences outside of the ones currently targeted, then the current momentum will die with this generation.” Chesser recognises that “preaching to the choir” will not ensure the survival of the transnational jihadist movement beyond the current generation.

Chesser’s plan for reforming and retargeting jihadist media is built upon a broadly inclusive approach toward potential jihadist recruits. He singles out three specific groups of people who are not currently targeted but should be in order to broaden the pool of potential recruits. The first of these groups is the “IQ Sub-100” or those who have “a degree of difficulty in understanding elaborate sentence structures and complicated political concepts”. This group, Chesser argues, often sees overly-complicated arguments as disingenuous trickery so it is best to keep the message of jihadist media targeting them simple and direct. A simplified approach will be more successful in convincing the “IQ Sub-100” group to support and participate in Al-Qaeda-style jihad.

The second group is “sinful Muslims”. Although they may not at first seem to be the ideal pool of recruits, this was the group that, according to Chesser, “virtually every single emigrant [jihadist] from the West was [a member of] at one time”. Because every single Western jihadist was at one time either a “*fasiq* [violator of Islamic law] or a *kafir* [unbeliever],” Chesser writes, adding, “we cannot think highly of ourselves”.

The third group is composed of those Muslims who blindly follow the schools of Muslim jurisprudential thought with regard to the application of Islamic law.

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*Creating an inclusive movement*

The driving goal of Chesser's strategy, as expressed in *Raising Al-Qaeda*, is the construction of as inclusive a jihadist movement as possible. Exactly how inclusive a movement can truly be is open to debate. He points to the Yemen-based AQAP-affiliated preacher Anwar al-Awlaqi as one of the most successful examples of a jihadist scholar who has actively reached out to "sinful" Muslims. By winning over these lapsed Muslims, he argues, "we will be doing a great thing toward the spiritual revitalisation of this *Ummah*." The third group, which he calls "*madhhabist*" Muslims or those who blindly follow a legal school of thought, can, in his view, be won over if jihadists ground their recruitment campaigns in the juridical traditions and schools of thought (*madhhab*) that members of this group adhere to.

In the essay's conclusion, Chesser argues that it is vital for jihadists to be specific in their discussions about what the creation of an Al-Qaeda-style Islamic state will mean for the world's Muslims. He writes: "The credibility of the mujahideen currently rests on their *jihad* and on their uncompromising nature when it comes to the truth... However, it is necessary to expand the areas in which the mujahideen have credibility with their audiences.... There is no harm in letting the movement develop unofficial policies on economics, education, leadership, power structure, transportation, science, technology, taxes, health, and other key areas that the Islamic state will have to address. Such works will encourage the movers and shakers of society to re-evaluate the jihad and the mujahideen. Additionally, it will provide the intellectual resources required for combating systems of unbelief and oppression." Chesser seeks to avoid the pitfalls and mistakes committed by "some" jihadist groups that he references but not by name. These groups are likely to include the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), of which Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) is the largest member group, and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), whose violent insurgent campaigns have backfired on their efforts to win mass support.[5]

*An uncertain vision?*

When questioned about his vision of an Islamic state in his last interview before his arrest by the FBI in late July, Chesser was non-specific as to the precise characteristics of such a state. He stated: "I hope to take part in the creation of an Islamic state where the *Sharia* [Islamic law] is applied with no exceptions of general matters of which there is a consensus... That is a bare minimum. After that I would hope that it [the Islamic state] is a just society where the law is applied and where the people are treated fairly. The leader [of the state] should not place himself above his subjects, and he should not abuse their property." [6] The steps to achieving such a state and ensuring that it is "just" are not discussed by Chesser.

Chesser was also less than forthcoming about a claim he made in his online conversation with this author when he was questioned about the lack of a large number of actual religious jurists and scholars among transnational jihadists. Chesser claimed that jihadist intellectuals such as

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Anwar al-Awlaqi often have certificates of their juridical education (*ijaza*) from “lesser known” religious scholars. Asked to name who these scholars were by this author, he dodged the question and simply responded with a general definition of an *ijaza*. [7]

When asked by this author what he hoped to achieve through his frequent online writings, Chesser responded: “I hope to help the Muslims in one way or another... Sometimes my target audience is the Muslims, sometimes it is the non-Muslims, and sometimes it is both. My objective depends on the audience. Sometimes I might try to dispel some misconception about Islam. I might try to provide a better picture of the situation on the ground in a particular region. Occasionally I write something completely with the I was somewhat successful in building audiences and influencing them for a while, so I mostly share my experience and my thoughts regarding that.” He continues that his efforts had shown some positive results: “I might be mistaken, but my impression is that I was at one point operating the #1 jihadist YouTube [sic] channel in terms of daily views, as well as RM [Revolution Muslim website] and my blog, which were both fairly successful.”[8]

When asked in the interview why, if he viewed Al-Qaeda’s military jihad as an individual religious requirement (*fard‘ayn*), he had not taken up arms himself, Chesser was defensive: “Simply leaving this country has been difficult enough for me so far.”[9] This claim was born out after his arrest when it was reported that he had tried and failed to travel to Somalia twice. [10] Earlier, in his online conversation with this author, Chesser wrote: “I have not decided not to make *hijrah* [to emigrate]. When I am able to make it, then I will, but until then I am stuck here [in the US].” Perhaps referencing the restrictions he faced as a result of inclusion on the US no-fly list, Chesser noted: “I have had quite a bit of difficulty with various legal documents needed for travel.” However, he affirmed his dedication to ultimately leaving the US to take up arms: “The obligation of [emigration for jihad] was about 99 percent of my decision to drop out of GMU [George Mason University].”[11]

Although this author noted and asked Chesser about his use of Somali transliterations of Arabic words and names, the significance of this did not become fully clear until his July arrest. News of his arrest also put into perspective his praise and unabashed admiration for US national Omar Hammami (alias Abu Mansur Al-Amrikee) who has been portrayed by Al-Shabab as a field militia commander and military instructor in numerous Al-Shabab propaganda videos.[12] In his online conversation with this author, Chesser wrote: “If you want to see an American *mujahid* [warrior of faith] who is actually on track to becoming a *sheikh* [religious scholar], then keep your eyes on Abu Mansur... He memorised the Quran in just 8 months. Also, he REALLY [Emphasis in the original] memorised it. In Somalia, a *hafiz* of Quran [one who has memorised it] is someone who knows it without any mistakes.”

### *Conclusion*

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On 19 October 2010 in the federal court of the Eastern District of Virginia Chesser pleaded guilty to charges of threatening writers of the television show *South Park*, soliciting violence, and attempting to provide material support to Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahideen in Somalia. He faces a maximum prison sentence of 30 years and is scheduled to be sentenced on February 25, 2011.[13]

While difficult to accurately gauge, the influence of Chesser's strategic and analytical writings should not be inflated, but they should also not be ignored. His numerous writings are a window, and often a detailed one at that, into the radicalisation process. Chesser's trajectory from his days as an online jihadist pundit to his attempt to join Al-Shabab is a telling instance of how such a process can move remarkably quickly from online activism to operational mobilisation. From his conversion to Islam in 2008, Chesser moved rapidly into the realm of cyber jihadist activism. As Jarret Brachman has noted, it remains an important open question as to whether Chesser will prove to be representative of a new generation of American jihadist pundit-operatives.[14]

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### Notes

[1] Talhah ibn 'Ubayd Allah (d. 656 C.E.) was one of the most prominent of the Prophet Muhammad's companions; he fought alongside him in a number of battles. He was killed in a failed revolt against the fourth successor (caliph) to Muhammad, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. In a written interview in which this author participated, Chesser discussed the reasons he chose to use the name of this companion: "[Talhah] was the fifth person in a narration [by Muhammad] when the Prophet listed the best of the companions. He was right after 'Ali ibn Abi Talib on this list. Very few people know his name, so I figured it would be good to remind them of this great companion." Chesser goes on to discuss Talhah's history as a warrior wounded fighting alongside the Prophet. Author Interview with Abu Talhah al-Amriki (13 July 2010). Accessed at: <http://jihadology.net/2010/07/13/exclusive-interview-with-abu-tal%E1%B8%A5ah-al-amriki-of-revolution-muslim/>

[2] Jarret Brachman, "My Pen Pal, the Jihadist", *Foreign Policy*, 29 July 2010. Accessed at: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/29/my\\_pen\\_pal\\_the\\_jihadist?page=0.0](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/29/my_pen_pal_the_jihadist?page=0.0)

[3] Islaam.com, "Strangeness and the Strangers." Accessed at: <http://www.islaam.com/article.aspx?id=218>

[4] Umaymah Al-Zawahiri. "*Risala ila al-Akhawat al-Muslimat* (Letter to the Muslim Sisters)", As-Sahab Media Foundation, 16 December 2009. See also: Nelly Lahoud. "Umayma al-Zawahiri on Women's Role in Jihad", *Jihadica*, 26 February 2010. Accessed at: <http://www.jihadica.com/umayma-al-zawahiri-on-women%E2%80%99s-role-in-jihad/>

[5] Brian Fishman. "Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside Al-Qaeda in Iraq", *Combating Terrorism Center*, West Point, 16 March 2009. Accessed at: [http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/DD\\_FINAL\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/DD_FINAL_FINAL.pdf)

[6] Author's interview with Abu Talhah al-Amriki (13 July 2010).

[7] Comments section of *Al-Maktabah* blog. Accessed at: <http://jihadology.net/2010/06/22/an%E1%B9%A3ar-al-mujahidin-english-forum-an-essay-by-dr-akram-%E1%B8%A5ijazi-ibn-taymiyyah-reviews/#comments>

[8] Author's interview with Abu Talhah al-Amriki (13 July 2010).

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Spencer S. Hsu and Michael Alison Chandler, "Graduate of VA's Oakton High Charged with Trying to Join Terrorist Group," *The Washington Post*, 22 July 2010. Accessed at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/21/AR2010072104577.html>

[11] Comments section of *Al-Maktabah* blog; comment made on 22 June 2010.

[12] For detailed profiles of Hammami, see Andrea Elliott. "The Jihadist Next Door," *The New York Times*, 27 January 2010. Accessed at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31Jihadist-t.html>. See also Christof Putzel's documentary for Current TV's *Vanguard* series, "American Jihadist," first aired 24 June 2010.

[13] U.S. Department of Justice. "Virginia Man Pleads Guilty to Providing Material Support to a Foreign Terrorist Organization and Encouraging Violent Jihadists to Kill U.S. Citizens"; Press release, 19 October 2010. Accessed at: <http://www.justice.gov/usao/vae/Pressreleases/10-OctoberPDFArchive/10/20101020chessernr.html>

[14] J. Brachman, *op. cit.*

## Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency

by Jason Rineheart

### *Abstract*

*This article focuses on current counterterrorism and counterinsurgency doctrines. It argues that the more traditional frameworks for analyzing counterterrorism campaigns, which structure debates around a military (or war) model or a criminal justice model, need to be updated in the light of the current state of terrorism. As a potential new framework, the author restructures the debate around hard and soft power tactics. He also describes how the existing counterinsurgency literature primarily focuses on two frameworks: classical and modern (or global) counterinsurgency. Using the war in Afghanistan as an example, he compares and contrasts the strengths, weaknesses, and potential offsetting effects of modern counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategies, arguing that in order for the United States to be successful in its battle against Al-Qaeda's brand of international terrorism, it must take its struggle from the open battlefields of counterinsurgency into the shadowy world of counterterrorism.*

### *Introduction*

Nine years after 9/11, the struggle against international terrorism is at a crossroads. Policy debates on whether to adopt a counterterrorism or counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan continue to drive contemporary security discourse in the United States and NATO.[1] However, these debates provide little strategic clarity on how to counter international terrorism. While Al-Qaeda's strategy is adaptive, the war in Afghanistan has become much more complicated than one would surmise from America's stated goal to "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future." [2] Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency debates on Afghanistan are somewhat shortsighted – focusing too much on the strengths and weaknesses of short and long-term commitments while avoiding critical discussions about what a sustainable counterterrorism strategy should consist of at the international level. The line between counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy has become increasingly blurred, yet they are two rather distinct doctrines.

The American-led invasion of Iraq not only diverted attention away from the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, it also gave rise to a new wave of research and analysis on insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare. While the Al-Qaeda terrorism threat was not entirely ignored, research on terrorism tended to aggregate America's terrorism and insurgency threats and frame counterterrorism within the context of counterinsurgency warfare, leading to the misleading conclusion that both strategies were mutually reinforcing. There were at least three perceptions of the problem at hand. The first focused on how Al-Qaeda was exploiting the largely nationalist insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to play the role of strategic spoiler. The second focused on the resilient and adaptive nature of Al-Qaeda as a global organization and its ability to project its ideology worldwide in order to gain more recruits and encourage new attacks. The

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third focused on the need to change the facts on the ground and address the root causes of terrorism.

This gave rise to several theoretical approaches to counter the threat posed to the U.S. forces on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan: including enhanced policing, better intelligence and information operations, increased international cooperation, counter-radicalization programs, and the need for good governance and economic development – all in an attempt to address the ill-understood underlying causes of terrorism. Such prescriptions tended to misunderstand the nature of the terrorism and overplay causal linkages.

In the following I shall try to address five questions: What is counterterrorism? How has counterterrorism evolved over the past four decades? What is the nature of counterinsurgency? How are counterterrorism and counterinsurgency doctrines similar and how are they different? And, finally, to what extent has the increased focus on counterinsurgency warfare after 9/11 affected how we view the current nature of counterterrorism?

#### *What is Counterterrorism?*

Counterterrorism is a difficult concept to define, especially for western democracies. Paul Wilkinson writes that: “There is no universally applicable counter-terrorism policy for democracies. Every conflict involving terrorism has its own unique characteristics.”[3] Both Paul Wilkinson and Louise Richardson argue, and they are not alone, that Western democracies must make respect for civil liberties and the rule of law a staple in their counterterrorism strategies.[4] While this advice to liberal democracies is admirable and complies with championed democratic principles, it does not amount to a counterterrorism strategy – these are simply highly valued principles meant to guide counterterrorism.

Counterterrorism is defined in the U.S. Army Field Manual as “Operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism.”[5]. This definition is more concrete but has its strengths and weaknesses. First, it correctly states that counterterrorism is an all-inclusive doctrine including prevention, deterrence, preemption, and responses, which would require bringing to bare all aspects of a nation’s power both domestically and internationally. Second, this definition includes everything but essentially differentiates nothing, which is a problem. If an effective counterterrorism doctrine means ‘whatever we need, whenever we need it,’ then this could create problems with developing effective counter strategies, allocating resources, and determining accountability – it might make the concept of counterterrorism rather worthless. There are, however, advantages to an all-encompassing approach to counterterrorism. It allows a government such as the United States to recognize the complexities of responding to terrorism; it also provides a rhetorical tool that reinforces the notion that there is no simple fix to America’s terrorism problem – but that does little to help our understanding of counterterrorism.

Counterterrorism operations are subject to change according to the nature of the terrorism threat. Indeed, international terrorism, particularly Al-Qaeda terrorism, is and remains persistent and adaptive. While terrorism is a tactic that cannot be entirely eradicated, steps can be taken to

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disrupt, dismantle, and ultimately defeat organizations that use terrorism. As such, policy prescriptions for addressing threats emanating from ‘corrigible’ groups like Hamas and Hezbollah will look entirely different according to the political context, the current threat environment, and, of course, the government conducting the counterterrorism operations. For instance, America would probably shy away from conducting Predator and Reaper drone strikes in southern Lebanon; this might not be a productive strategy in the long-term if the objective is to encourage Hezbollah to renounce terrorism, disarm, and fully blend its political and military forces into the existing Lebanese system. By the same token, while Israel may continue to carry out targeted assassination strikes against Hamas leaders, it would not be in the interest of American foreign policy or its counterterrorism policy to conduct U.S. strikes in Gaza and the West Bank. Al-Qaeda, on the other hand, is considered an ‘incorrigible’ terrorist organization with ambitious socio-political objectives which no government could realistically accommodate when trying to negotiate a political settlement and bring about an end to Al-Qaeda’s terrorism. Therefore, America has chosen a clearly enemy-centric approach to combating Al-Qaeda in order to achieve its objectives, which, as President Obama has recently stated, is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al-Qaeda.

In order to effectively frame current American counterterrorism efforts, it is important to appreciate the difference between counterterrorism policy and counterterrorism operations, and to fully understand the competing objectives and mandates within the American government. The U.S. Department of State has had a long-term no concessions counterterrorism policy, which continues today.[6] This position was defined early on during its struggle against international terrorism. In 1973, Palestinian terrorists seized six diplomats (including the American ambassador to Sudan) in Khartoum and demanded the release of over 60 terrorists jailed in Israel, Jordan, West Germany, and the United States. Richard Nixon’s response was direct: “As far as the United States as a government giving in to blackmail demands, we cannot do so and will not do so.”[7] However, after 9/11, while America’s no concessions policy remains intact, counterterrorism operations carried out by the Department of Defense and CIA highlight that counterterrorism had evolved into a more lethal form of asymmetric warfare, which further blurred the line between policy and operations and reinforced the notion that counterterrorism has become an all-encompassing approach.

American counterterrorism policy and operations worldwide have, at times, appeared to present contradictions. But this is largely a problem of understanding the American bureaucracy and the competing efforts of the U.S. State Department, Department of Defense, and its intelligence agencies, rather than proving or disproving any contradictions in American counterterrorism policy. For example, Mark Perry has recently argued that America must talk to terrorists or risk losing the so-called war on terrorism. Perry argues that America violated its ‘no concessions’ counterterrorism policy in Iraq when it chose to negotiate a settlement with the loose network of Iraqi tribal militias in the al-Anbar province. By this logic, he argues, the U.S. must engage with other terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah because they are completely rational organizations with realistic political and social goals.[8] But within the fog of war in Iraq, it is

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important to understand how the negotiations unfolded. The American military engaged in talks with an insurgent enemy in order to quell violence within the broader context of an ongoing war. On the other hand, future negotiations with Hamas or Hezbollah, if they were to ever take place, would be handled by the Department of State within a non-war context.

Daniel Byman argues that despite America's attempts to isolate and weaken Hamas, the group has emerged stronger than ever and that direct engagement is the only option for resolving the conflict.[9] The same can be said for Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, practically no responsible analyst has argued that direct engagement with Al-Qaeda is an option for ending Al-Qaeda's terrorism. This highlights the fact that different counterterrorism strategies are needed for different terrorist organizations and that different departments within the same government have different approaches. In short, America's ability to successfully isolate and weaken terrorist organizations is subject to debates.

We also have to look how counterterrorism has evolved over the past four decades in order to fully appreciate the current state of affairs and the widening gap between policies and operations.

#### *The Evolution of Counterterrorism*

Counterterrorism has changed over the past four decades; unsurprisingly, this evolution has mirrored changes in the nature of terrorism. The current wave of international terrorism began arguably on July 22, 1968, when three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked a commercial passenger flight from Rome to Tel Aviv.[10] This represented at least three novelties. First, it was one of the first hijackings where the objective was primarily political, and the target was specifically chosen for its symbolism. Instead of hijacking any airplane, three Palestinian terrorists took control of an El Al plane from Israel's national airline. Second, the hijacking was intended to influence a wider audience, rather than for personal criminal gain or for escape by simply redirecting a flight for transport. Rather, the terrorists were intending to trade hostages for imprisoned Palestinian terrorists in Israel. In addition, it was the first time a terrorist organization began operating regularly at the international level, leaving its home turf to attack citizens of a foreign country who, in many cases, had nothing to do with their struggle in order to promote their political cause before an international audience.[11] This encouraged other non-Palestinian groups – such as the ethno-nationalist/separatist ASALA (the Armenian Army for the Secret Liberation of Armenia), the JCAG (Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide), militant elements within the Free South Moluccan Youth organization, and left-wing groups such as the German Red Army Faction (a.k.a. the Baader-Meinhof Group) – to “internationalize” their political struggles. These groups, Bruce Hoffman observed, learned from the PFLP that they could promote their cause worldwide by simply taking a plane, its crew, and its passengers hostage. “When we hijack a plane it has more effect than if we killed a hundred Israelis in battle,” said George Habbash, the founding leader of the PFLP in a 1970 interview. “For decades world opinion has been neither for nor against the Palestinians. It simply ignored us,” he said. “At least the world is talking about us now.”[12]

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International terrorism became a serious problem in 1968 for two reasons. First the loss of the 1967 Six-Day War, and subsequent Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, West Bank, and the Sinai Peninsula, was a devastating defeat for the Palestinians and the Arab countries bordering Israel. This inspired groups like the PFLP to begin operating internationally to promote their cause because there was no chance that it could defeat Israel on the battlefield. Second, Latin American guerrilla fighters, frustrated with their battlefield failures in the countryside, began an urban terrorism campaign, which involved at first mainly the kidnapping of foreign diplomats. The primary tactics used by all of these groups were hijackings, kidnappings, and embassy raids, and the intention was, in addition to obtaining publicity, gaining ransoms and having imprisoned comrades exchanged for hostages and/or a safe passage away from the crime scene.[13] Such terrorist blackmail forced governments to respond accordingly. While acts of terrorism at this time killed relatively few people, such publicity stunts put tremendous pressure on governments to respond responsibly since a wrong decision during a hostage crisis could have disastrous consequences and the blame was likely to land in the court of the government. An example of this was the German response to the attack on Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich on September 5, 1972: eleven Israeli athletes (and eight members of the Palestinian Black September) were killed after a hostage standoff that ended in a shootout. While the West German government was not the primary target of the attack, the scene of crime was on German soil and the government was forced to act and bungled in its rescue attempt. This was an eye-opener as not only Germany but many other governments realized how insufficient their response capabilities were. As a consequence, several countries developed elite rapid-reaction hostage rescue teams. In short, during this period, governments' counterterrorism efforts consisted mainly in improving responses to groups hijacking international flights, taking hostages, and raiding embassies. At that time, the terrorists' primary intention was not to kill, but rather to raise attention for their cause by playing to the media and blackmailing governments into acceding to their political demands before worldwide television audiences.

Over time the nature of international terrorism changed and so too did counterterrorism.[14] It appeared that terrorists were no longer taking people hostage or hijacking airplanes as the primary tactic to achieve their goals. These tactics offered diminishing returns and no success in achieving the terrorists' primary political objectives. Palestinian militants quickly realized that hostage takings and hijackings were little more than a nuisance to governments.

Yasser Arafat eventually renounced terrorism and engaged in peace talks with the Israeli government in the mid-1990s.

New groups, such as Hamas, introduced more lethal tactics like suicide bombings with the intention of achieving at least the same level of limited strategic success that Hezbollah and the Tamil Tigers had reached by using suicide strategies.[15] Al-Qaeda also started attacking the United States, aiming at mass-casualty terrorism from the 1990s onward, which culminated with the theatrically orchestrated 9/11 attacks. In 1995, the Japanese religious cult Aum-Shinrikyo carried out a Sarin gas attack on a Tokyo subway system, apparently with the intention of causing mass casualties. Terrorism had evolved into a more lethal and indiscriminate form of

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warfare that appeared to be more religiously motivated. This once again put governments in a predicament to respond forcefully to an enemy that it did not entirely understand.

The evolution of counterterrorism over the past forty years was a slow process that involved adapting to the nature of international terrorism, as well as taking advantage of new advancements in military technology. The Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) played a significant role in this evolution. The RMA is associated with new advancements in military technologies. It began in the 1970s during the nuclear stalemate between America and the Soviet Union when it was becoming clear that possession of nuclear weapons offered little strategic or political advantage over the other since using them would have drastic consequences. The answer, for America, was to develop more conventional weapons capabilities that the USSR did not have or could not afford to develop. This, it was assumed, would ultimately give them the upper hand in the event of a conventional war.[16] Yet the new weapons had to be politically and morally acceptable, i.e. they had to be precise, minimize collateral damage, and reduce the risk of death by the military personnel delivering them.[17] They had to make war “bloodless, risk-free and precise as possible.”[18] These military capabilities, combined with modern advancements in computer technology, were the kicker in the RMA, because if linked into precision-guided weaponry, military commanders could, in theory, orchestrate the battlefield in real-time from a safe distance. These advancements in military technologies are what Michael Ignatieff dubbed “virtual war,” meaning “a war without death – to our side – is a war that ceases to be fully real to us.”[19]

After 9/11 the evolution of counterterrorism became more apparent. Michael Boyle argues “the development of counterterrorism as a model of warfare is new to the post-September 11 era.”[20] Peter Bergen dubs counterterrorism in the post-9/11 world as “The Drone War”; some have even characterized the Obama administration’s over-reliance on drones as the “Obama Doctrine.” Indeed, the use of unmanned aerial Predator and Reaper drones by the US military and CIA has revolutionized how America combats terrorism; it can be seen as a new tactic in counterterrorism warfare. But using unmanned drones is not the first attempt by America to use the benefits of the RMA to respond to international terrorism. Before 9/11, President Bill Clinton ordered a one-off, precision-guided cruise missile attack aimed at Al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan in response to the 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The use of unmanned drones has had interesting implications on the development of counterterrorism strategies not only in the unpopular Bush administration, but as highlighted above, the Obama administration has considered drone warfare to be “the only game in town”.

“President Obama has not only continued the drone program,” writes Peter Bergen, “he has ratcheted it up further.” He goes on to say that in 2007 “there were three drone strikes in Pakistan; in 2008, there were 34; and, in the first months of 2009, the Obama administration has already authorized 16.”[21] At the time of writing, in 2010 alone, the Obama administration has authorized over one-hundred drone strikes worldwide. The large majority of them have occurred in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.[22] Regardless of the controversy surrounding these operations, American drone strikes have been successful to a certain extent.

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Mohammed Atef, AQ's top military strategist, was killed in November 2001 in a drone strike near Kabul, two months after the 9/11 attacks. In 2002, Abu Ali Al Harethi, a suspected mastermind of the 2000 attack on the USS Cole, was killed in Yemen - the first drone operation outside of Afghanistan. Kamal Derwish, an American citizen, was also killed in the attack - the first American citizen to be killed by a CIA-orchestrated drone strike.[23] Drone strikes have also been seen as successful. Since 2008, according to Bergen, "U.S. drones have killed dozens of lower-ranking militants and at least ten mid-and upper-level leaders within Al Qaeda or the Taliban." [24]

However, it is debatable whether the drone strikes will prove strategically successful in the long-term, due to their often-unintended consequences. Killing AQ leaders and rank-and-file members might be considered a 'success' in the short-term, but they can be replaced relatively quickly. Drone strikes can also lead to collateral damage, killing innocent bystanders who are presumably not affiliated with AQ or its leaders, which could alienate the local population or blunt the effectiveness of more population-centric strategies such as state-building and counterinsurgency, which focuses on winning the legitimacy of the local population and promoting good governance. Yet it remains to be seen if drone attacks alone are sustainable. In order to identify, locate, and target AQ and its affiliates from the air in regions like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen, America needs effective and timely human intelligence. Drone strikes are also questionable from an ethical and international law perspective because operations are deadly – capitulation to a drone is not possible. Such strikes may well violate the sovereignty of a state like Pakistan, which allows America to carry out attacks in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which has historically been an autonomous region outside the authority of the Pakistani government. Yet the Pakistani government has yet to authorize strikes in Baluchistan which is a hotbed for Islamic extremism in Pakistan proper. At the end of the day, an advanced drone program is an operational tool, and a campaign of targeted strikes can provide a counterterrorism strategy with some innovative and timely successes. Yet drone operations are a tactic, not an overarching strategy. Moreover, the changes in the nature of counterterrorism raise a larger question of the nature of power in modern counterterrorism operations. If counterterrorism is indeed an all-encompassing approach requiring all aspects of a nation's power, then it is important to understand both the hard and soft power options of counterterrorism.

#### *Hard and Soft Power in Counterterrorism*

Existing research on counterterrorism tends to structure debates around two approaches: the war (or military) model and the criminal justice model.[25] The war model tends to frame the struggle against terrorism in military terms of an enemy-centric war where the armed forces of a state are primarily in charge of developing counterterrorism strategy. On the other hand, the criminal justice model champions the rule of law and democratic values which prevail in Western democracies. Doing so puts restrictions on the government and thereby risks reducing the effectiveness of counterterrorism measures. However, as Ami Pedahzur and Magnus Ranstorp have argued, both models rarely function according to academic theory during an actual

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counterterrorism campaign. While democracies tend to champion democratic ideals and the preservation of civil liberties, their attempts to combat terrorism forcefully have continually tested the boundaries of the criminal justice model.[26]

There is a need to view counterterrorism from other angles. It is becoming increasingly clear that a new framework is needed in order to develop and measure successful counterterrorism strategies.[27] Considering the evolution of counterterrorism, it could be more useful to view counterterrorism in terms of “hard” and “soft” power. This would require restructuring the debate around a direct and indirect approach to counterterrorism.[28] The direct approach would be an enemy-centric doctrine consisting of primarily offensive, hard power tactics such as Predator and Reaper drone strikes, special forces operations, increased policing and intelligence operations. These are useful tools if the goal is to isolate and destroy groups like Al-Qaeda. The indirect soft power approach would consist of population-centric methods, and would contain features such as capacity building, economic development, and counter-radicalization focusing on the underlying causes that allow terrorism to thrive.

The direct approach to counterterrorism is straightforward but it raises serious questions regarding the ethical and legal use of force – on top of the issue of collection of intelligence and the protection of civil liberties within a democratic society. On the other hand, it remains to be seen if soft power alternatives such as democracy promotion, economic development, and counter-radicalization effectively address the ill-defined “root causes” of terrorism. Robert Jervis argues that even if political oppression, weak states, poverty, and economic inequality were the real root causes, “there is little reason to think that we could deal with them effectively”. He concludes that “we cannot point to solid evidence that doing so would make much difference.”[29] This is not to say that American involvement internationally would not include some form of economic and development assistance in weak and failing nations. But it is difficult to give aid to weak states like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen and expect to be able to determine effectiveness in terms of countering Al-Qaeda’s terrorism. Moreover, providing development aid to increase capacity building is questionable from a counterterrorism perspective since a causal link between weak states and terrorism cannot be proven. Aid may well increase the standard of living, level of education and general quality of life in some countries. Yet it is difficult to argue that locals would turn to terrorism or political violence without it. Furthermore, such root cause theories would have to address the fact that homegrown terrorists do indeed radicalize and carry out attacks in democratic countries as well as weak and failing nations – and that while poverty and economic inequality are prevalent throughout the world, terrorism is not.[30] It may be more useful from a counterterrorism perspective to view terrorists as rational actors who adopt the tactic of terrorism as a strategic choice to pursue political objectives, not as passive observers who are susceptible to what the supposed underlying causes forces them to do.[31]

Then there is the issue of counter-radicalization and de-radicalization in counterterrorism. Some argue that terrorist radicalization and de-radicalization should be viewed as a complex process consisting of a variety of interdependent push- and pull-factors and triggering events that drive

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people into and out of terrorism.[32] Others contend that social networks and group dynamics better explain how individuals are violently radicalized.[33] So far theories of radicalization have had difficulties in explaining why individuals take up or leave terrorism behind. This is mainly due to the fact that terrorists come from a wide variety of backgrounds and there exists no single individual terrorist profile.[34] Despite the absence of a single terrorist phenotype, some view counter-radicalization programs as a critical part of counterterrorism. Lorenzo Vidino argues that attempts to dismantle terrorist networks is similar to playing a game of “whack-a-mole” and that governments should take steps to prevent radicalization in order to stop people from becoming terrorists. He goes on to argue that anti-radicalization programs would vary from “convening interfaith meetings to creating government-funded Muslim magazines and TV channels, from promoting lectures of Muslim clerics exposing the theological flaws of al Qaeda’s ideology to mentoring projects and professional development seminars.”[35] Theories of counter-radicalization also have trouble measuring success from a counterterrorism perspective, because such programs essentially amount to increased community engagement that requires community leaders to target and mentor individuals who are presumably susceptible to terrorism recruitment. Yet it is difficult to prove that they would have turned to terrorism in the first place, and, more importantly, that they will not engage in terrorism afterwards.

Some go a step further and look at ways soft power can facilitate an exit for individuals from terrorist groups, arguing that government counterterrorism programs should offer terrorists a pathway out of terrorism by facilitating disengagement and rehabilitation.[36] While research on disengagement, de-radicalization, and rehabilitation is in the early stages, it is realistic that (local) government can play a crucial role in facilitate pathways out of terrorism for groups and individuals who want to leave terrorism behind.[37] In Lebanon, soft approaches such as political engagement and increased capacity building might have some influence on bringing about Hezbollah’s disarmament and its full integration into the Lebanese political system. Yet the fact remains that Hezbollah already chose to join the political process in Lebanon many years ago and has yet to decommission its militia.[38] Similarly, attempts to weaken and isolate Hamas have proved questionable from a hard power perspective. Hamas showed in 2006 that it could use democracy to its benefit without having to moderate its political aims or renounce violence. The FMLN in Central America, on the other hand, decommissioned its militia and joined a democratic system in the early 1990; it is now one of the largest political parties in El Salvador. So the record is mixed on whether democracy can offer groups a pathway out of terrorism. Yet it is reasonable to assume that some soft power measures could indeed offer certain individuals and groups some sort of pathway out of terrorism.

While both hard and soft power measures in counterterrorism do not necessarily provide a magical way to defeat terrorism, such a framework can be a useful way to characterize and analyze counterterrorism initiatives. In the context of countering Al-Qaeda terrorism, however, it seems America prefers hard power to soft power. One of Al-Qaeda’s primary goals is to reverse American foreign policy and its influence in the Middle East while overthrowing corrupt Arab regimes it supports.[39] But it is clear, and rightfully so, that American government has little

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appetite for addressing the root causes of Al-Qaeda's terrorism since it has just approved \$60 billion in military sales to Saudi Arabia - the largest military sales package ever for an Arab state [40]. According to Bob Woodward's new book *Obama's Wars*, the CIA has Presidential and Congressional approval to carry out covert, lethal counterterrorism operations in over sixty countries. It also manages a 3,000-man team of Afghans known as Counterterrorism Pursuit Teams (CTPT). Its purpose is to take the fight to Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In short, it appears that for the time being aerial drone strikes and other hard power tools will drive American counterterrorism strategy.[41]

Nevertheless, America should be mindful that counterterrorism operations that cause high civilian casualties rates allow terrorists to exploit its actions and to strengthen their own position from a propaganda perspective. There is a fine line between effectively responding to terrorism and strategic overreach. John Brennan, President Obama's top counterterrorism advisor, recently commented on the need to resist using the "hammer" in counterterrorism. He went on to argue that America must use the "scalpel" and prepare for a long struggle against Al-Qaeda, a struggle that would take the fight from the battlegrounds of counterinsurgency into the shadows of more covert counter terrorist operations.[42] However, this does not mean that more precise is necessarily less lethal. While post-modern terrorists may want a lot of people watching and a lot of people dead, covert counterterrorism forces now want few people watching and a lot of terrorists dead.

### *Counterinsurgency Theory*

How does counterinsurgency differ from counterterrorism? Counterinsurgency has been defined as "those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency." [43] Based on this definition, counterinsurgency is an all-encompassing approach to countering irregular insurgent warfare – an approach which recognizes that a military solution to a conflict is not feasible; only a combined military, political, and civilian solution is possible. Seth Jones of the RAND Corporation has argued that, based on his analysis of 90 insurgencies, defeating an insurgency is a long process that lasts on average 14 years.[44] T. E. Lawrence has been quoted as saying "to make war upon rebellion is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife." [45]

There are several studies that highlight the best practices of waging counterinsurgency warfare. David Galula, a former Lieutenant Colonel in the French army, is considered the intellectual God Father of counterinsurgency studies. In his famous book *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964), Galula argued that, in order to counter an insurgency, it was essential for the counterinsurgent to win the support and legitimacy of the local population, promote good governance, and keep a sufficient amount of troops in an area to provide security after the governments forces have taken it over. He also argues that is important to "destroy or expel the main body of armed insurgents" or, if that is not possible, to "win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants." [46] These principles provided the intellectual framework for countries like America and Britain to further develop and implement their respective counterinsurgency

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doctrines at both the theoretical and practical level. They are also the foundation of General Petraeus's "clear, hold, and build" strategy.

John Nagl, building on Galula's work, argues that there are two approaches to counterinsurgency: the direct and indirect approach. The direct approach focuses primarily on defeating the enemy with military force. The indirect approach, on the other hand, involving a "battle for the hearts and minds," focuses on a more population-centric strategy. It involves denying the insurgency the support of the local population while at the same time attacking the insurgency with military force.[47] The primary goal of both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent is promoting good governance and winning legitimacy in the eyes of the local population. This framework for victory has been the primary focus of American counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a consequence, General Petraeus's declaratory strategy has revolved around denying the insurgency its sanctuary within the population and training the local security services to hold the territory so the insurgents do not return, while building infrastructure, promoting good governance, and eliminating political corruption – thereby winning the population's "hearts and minds."

Counterinsurgency theory can be seen within a classical and modern framework. Classical counterinsurgency theory is similar to both the Nagl and Petraeus approaches. Since a classical insurgency is generally associated with a struggle within one state, with a possible safe haven in a bordering state, a classical counterinsurgency is confined within the borders of a single state. Seth Jones, in his analysis of 90 insurgencies, identified three key variables that are, in theory, critical to a successful classical counterinsurgency: 1) training the local police and security forces to combat the insurgency; 2) improving the quality of local governance; and, 3) denying the insurgency any external support and outside sanctuary.[48] Jones goes on to argue that America is not likely to commit itself to a 14-year long counterinsurgency in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan. Thus, in his view, training and supporting the host government's security forces to defeat the insurgency is critical. Locals have more legitimacy and are more familiar with the local geography, language, culture, political landscape, and history. They are simply more capable of gathering intelligence from the local population and thus should take the lead in any long-term counterinsurgency effort.

Modern counterinsurgency theory, on the other hand, takes a more international approach. After 9/11, Al-Qaeda's network across national borders was characterized by many as a global insurgency.[49] This new insurgency threat was not only local, it was international, which as some argue, requires a re-thinking of how such irregular warfare should be combated.[50] Many counterinsurgency experts acknowledge that as the nature of an insurgency evolves so too does the counterinsurgency strategy[51] Indeed, Kilcullen's observation that "a globalized insurgency demands a rethink of traditional counterinsurgency" appears to make sense if one subscribes to the argument that Al-Qaeda is a global Islamist insurgency.[52] Bruce Hoffman recently framed the global Al-Qaeda threat in a similar way, and argued that while AQ does not enjoy the operational safe-haven it did before 9/11, it has "nevertheless been able to reconstitute its global terrorist reach."[53] As such, Hoffman argues that a new Global Counterinsurgency (GCOIN)

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strategy is needed to combat this international terrorist threat. This approach would include: vital information operations to counter the radical narratives; separating the enemy from its support base to deny it sanctuaries and freedom of movement; continuing to detect and defuse the enemy domestically and internationally; and a commitment to build legitimate civil governance which could counter the underlying causes of terrorism and insurgency.[54] This modern approach is basically a classical counterinsurgency theory of winning the “hearts and minds,” which denies the enemy sanctuary, seeking to promote good governance and engaging in information operations - but on a global scale. It is a much more ambitious undertaking than conducting classical counterinsurgency within a single state. However, it also remains to be seen whether AQ merits this type of attention and whether it really amounts to a global Islamist insurgency.

If we consider Al-Qaeda a serious global insurgency threat that has the resources and support to overthrow multiples governments worldwide, then it is certainly reasonable to adopt both Kilcullen and Hoffman’s approaches. However, if we do so it blurs even further the line between counterterrorism and counterinsurgency because it not only inhibits our understanding of both doctrines, it requires us to develop a new form of hybrid warfare. Just because an organization such as Al-Qaeda may use terrorism on an international scale and dabble in domestic insurgencies does not make it subject to the same respective counter strategies. Furthermore, to a certain extent, labeling Al-Qaeda as a globalized insurgency threat legitimizes Al-Qaeda’s cause and gives this organization or network too much credit. “The Al-Qaeda organization is neither an insurgency against a US hegemonic order nor the vanguard of a global Islamic resistance to globalization and westernization,” Michael Boyle has argued. “It is a resilient and highly lethal terrorist organization with a fanciful political programme and relatively little popular support in the Muslim world.”[55]

#### *Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency*

Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency are two fundamentally different doctrines and it is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each in order to fully appreciate the offsetting effects they might have. Michael Boyle has recently asked the question whether counterterrorism and counterinsurgency go together, and concluded that there is no reason to think that both strategies are fully compatible or mutually reinforcing, and despite the recent conflation of the two doctrines, that a counterinsurgency strategy should not be seen as a counterterrorism strategy and vice-versa.[56] Counterinsurgency can provide a clear framework for success if the situation is ripe for this type of warfare. The main tenet of counterinsurgency recognizes that a sole military solution is not feasible, making it essential for a dual military-political solution that adopts a population-centric approach. Additionally, counterinsurgency doctrine rests on a few key pillars of protecting the local population, promoting good governance, eliminating enemy safe-havens, and training the locals to take the fight to the insurgency. Classical counterinsurgency seeks to combat an insurgency confined within the borders a nation-state, while modern counterinsurgency theory takes these classical principles and applies them at the international level, or what Bruce Hoffman calls Global

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Counterinsurgency (GCOIN), which ultimately seeks to combat international terrorism while addressing the underlying socio-economic conditions that supposedly allow terrorism to thrive. Counterterrorism, on the other hand, provides a less clear framework for success but is equally complex. Counterterrorism has evolved over the past four decades into a more lethal form of unconventional warfare. Not surprisingly, this evolution has mirrored the trends in international terrorism. Since international terrorists from the late 1960s to roughly the end of the Cold War were primarily hijacking airplanes, raiding embassies, and taking hostages to promote their causes, counterterrorism forces adjusted to meet these threats. Yet over the past few decades terrorism has become bloodier and more indiscriminate, which forced governments to adjust their counter tactics. With the RMA developing unmanned, precision-guided weaponry that drastically decreases the risk of one's own soldiers dying in conflict on the ground, counterterrorism was able to evolve into a form of irregular warfare that is, as Michael Ignatieff described the RMA, as "bloodless, risk-free and precise as possible."<sup>[57]</sup> Instead of hostage negotiators being called to deal with a terrorist's demands, now a soldier operates unmanned aerial Predator and Reaper drones with Hellfire missiles to seek and destroy Al-Qaeda terrorists. Counterterrorism today is indeed a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. In the context of combating Al-Qaeda, counterterrorism is a sharp, quick, and lethal form of warfare focused on isolating, boxing in, and destroying the organization and its members. However, counterterrorism is something entirely different when thinking in terms of dealing with the complexities of Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as the hard and soft power alternatives that an all-encompassing strategy can bring to bear.

Recently the debate between counterterrorism and counterinsurgency advocates has gained traction within the Obama administration. Some argue that a long-term counterinsurgency is the only way to achieve America's goals in Afghanistan, while others argue that it does little to address the global threat posed by Al-Qaeda. For this a number of reasons can be cited. First, Afghanistan has been a "nightmare, a graveyard of empires," ranging from the Brits to the Soviets and now, potentially also to the Americans.<sup>[58]</sup> No one has ever effectively ruled Afghanistan. The country is so diverse in terms of its tribal structures that no unified state has ever been formed. Second, based on the counterinsurgency principles, success in Afghanistan requires certain underlying conditions that America currently does not have and cannot create. For example, having a legitimate host government is the bedrock of any successful counterinsurgency strategy. However, the current Karzai regime has been criticized for being extremely corrupt and for having made little progress in development.<sup>[59]</sup>

A recent poll of 6,500 Afghans conducted in 34 of the 36 provinces put the police and judiciary as the most corrupt departments in the Afghan government. These are the very entities responsible for implementing the rule of law.<sup>[60]</sup> Different U.S. governmental agencies in Afghanistan also appear to be working at cross-purposes. For example, the CIA has been funding Hamid Karzai's corrupt brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, who is essentially the governor of Kandahar City, to provide security, collect intelligence, and combat the Taliban using his local militias. But the military, at the same time, is working to promote legitimate governance and win

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the “hearts and minds” of the locals. Major General Michael Flynn was quoted as saying: “If we are going to conduct a population-centric strategy in Afghanistan and we are perceived as backing thugs, then we are just undermining ourselves.”[61] Furthermore, CIA drone operations used for counterterrorism purposes are not only highly lethal but also have a tendency to cause unintended civilian casualties. Therefore, while targeted drone strikes that have relatively high levels of collateral damage may be seen as a necessary evil for a successful counterterrorism strategy, it essentially blunts the effectiveness of the nearby counterinsurgency operation since it has the potential to further alienate the local population.[62]

Third, the costs of a long-term commitment to counterinsurgency in Afghanistan are astronomic. As Kalev Sepp has argued, “If – as in Iraq – counterinsurgency means a campaign that will cost \$2 trillion, engage 150,000 troops, see the deaths of some 5,000 of those soldiers, and last for at least six years with an indeterminate end, then only the United States can do it, and probably only once in a generation.”[63] According to Bob Woodward’s new book on the Obama administration, President Obama has been quoted as saying, in relation to the war in Afghanistan: “I’m not doing long-term nation-building. I am not spending a trillion dollars.”[64] Due to the costs of counterinsurgency warfare, as the argument goes, the United States is not likely to sustain an international coalition or the international legitimacy required that some argue is critical to succeeding in Afghanistan. Fourth, counterinsurgency is “clearly not working” writes Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations.[65] Haass goes on to argue that America must stop thinking that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda represent the same security threat to Afghanistan and to its national security interests in the region, and that the Taliban is not likely to harbor Al-Qaeda again because of the enormous consequences.

Above all, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategies must keep in mind the current threat that Al-Qaeda poses. CIA Director Leon Panetta estimated that Al-Qaeda has only “60 to 100, maybe less” members in Afghanistan.[66] And a recent estimate put its size in both Afghanistan and Pakistan at fewer than 500.[67] So if the mission in Afghanistan is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al-Qaeda, as President Obama has stated, then a strategy focusing on this threat seems to be more feasible and have a higher likelihood of success. However, some have argued that the size of Al-Qaeda’s membership in Afghanistan and Pakistan is not necessary a productive method to measure its strength. Al-Qaeda has never had more than a few hundred core members and it continues to use affiliate organizations to project its terrorist brand internationally.[68] Whatever its size, as America’s battle against Al-Qaeda continues worldwide, it seems counterinsurgency warfare will be marginalized for a more enemy-centric counterterrorism strategy which will utilize a variety of hard and soft power tactics to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy Al-Qaeda.

### *Conclusion*

The line between counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy has become increasingly blurred, yet as we have seen, both concepts represent two different strategic doctrines. However, the increased focus on counterinsurgency warfare after 9/11 has affected how we view current

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counterterrorism efforts. At the heart of any counterinsurgency strategy is a “hearts and minds” approach of promoting good governance and gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the local population. This way of thinking appears to have had a certain impact on the development of more soft power counterterrorism measures, which now seek to promote legitimate governance and capacity building to address the somewhat unclear underlying causes of terrorism. Indeed, Daniel Benjamin, the U.S. State Department’s Coordinator of Counterterrorism, writes that America must address the complex factors of radicalization and “confront the political, social, and economic conditions that our enemies exploit to win over recruits and funders” by increasing “foreign assistance to nations and communities where violent extremism has made inroads, such as Pakistan and Yemen.”[69] This view reinforces the notion that America can effectively address its terrorism problems by changing the facts on the ground. Yet, in reality, this only highlights the State Department’s strategy for countering Al-Qaeda terrorism, which at the end of the day assumes a dubious causal linkage between socio-economic and political conditions and terrorism, and appears to be at odds with the more hard power approaches used by the CIA and American military.

However, critical questions remain regarding American counterterrorism strategy. Will the hard power counterterrorism tactics such as Predator drone strikes used by the CIA blunt the effectiveness of the State Department’s soft approach to counterterrorism? In contrast to counterinsurgency doctrine, does America really need the support and legitimacy of a local population in order to be successful in counterterrorism?[70] If so, can America and its allies develop a realistic framework to counter extremism and violent radicalization? If not, to what extent can hard power tactics prove strategically successful? Can both hard and soft power in counterterrorism be fully compatible and mutually reinforcing, or will both always operate at cross-purposes? And, more importantly, just because local populations in regions like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia may have extremist views or despise American foreign policy, does that necessarily mean they will join Al-Qaeda and resort to international terrorism? In short, the larger task for America and its allies will be to find adequate answers to such questions and determine what the long, perhaps multigenerational struggle against international terrorism will look like after the war in Afghanistan, and, in this way, move beyond the current debate surrounding counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.

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- [70] This question was raised by Michael Boyle at a counterterrorism workshop in St Andrews, United Kingdom, 2010.
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## **Terrorism Research Centres: 100 Institutes, Programs and Organisations in the Field of Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, Radicalisation and Asymmetric Warfare Studies**

**Compiled by Benjamin Freedman**

(Editorial Assistant, Terrorism Research Initiative)

### *Introduction*

Who is doing research – academic and otherwise – on terrorism? The field of terrorism research is broad and ever-expanding. Governments sponsor intelligence-driven analytical research agencies. Commercial intelligence firms like *Jane's*, sell their research to corporate and governmental clients. There are think tanks like RAND, which work closely with government agencies. An increasing number of universities house terrorism research centres, the oldest one being the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews. Then there are virtual networks, such as the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), that try to create synergies between a wide array of researchers and topics.

Beyond organizational makeup, notable differences in research approach also exist. For instance, the gulf between those who work as contractors for homeland security departments and those who work in the policy world. Or, the gap between those who work with classified intelligence and those who work only with open source material. Then there is a divide between those who are considered 'orthodox' scholars and those who call themselves 'critical terrorism scholars' (CTS). The latter, at times, call the former 'terrorologists'; those, in turn, label some from the CTS school 'hypocritical'.

Considering the proliferation of government agencies, private firms, research organizations and internet-based initiatives, the number of newcomers to the field of Terrorism Studies is substantial. Some focus on more general issues like social conflict, armed conflict or political violence topics that often include terrorism-related research. Still others maintain a national, regional, or even global, focus. Much work comes from English-speaking countries and Israel, while other parts of the world are notably under-represented. Trying to create an inventory of such a broad spectrum of research organizations also proves challenging as there are several website-only "centres" directed by a single individual with little visible – or 'credible' – output.

In the following list we present a collection of 100 centres, organisations, institutes, programs and projects that seek to expand the research community's collective knowledge of terrorism, counterterrorism, political violence, radicalisation and asymmetric conflict. In an attempt to provide an overview, a broad array of entities beyond proper academic research centres and institutes have been included. Though many of the entries on this list may receive government funding, state agencies and departments involved in terrorism research have not been included.

Our list is incomplete and, as such, might leave off centres well worth including. We have tried to include only credible, professional organizations though might not have been fully successful

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in doing so. We welcome feedback from the readers of *Perspectives on Terrorism* on the present status and work of the entities on our list, as well as on entities left off which are worth including (contact: [info@terrorismanalysts.com](mailto:info@terrorismanalysts.com)).

<b>Centre Project, Program, Issue</b>	<b>Affiliated Organisation, Institute</b>	<b>Location</b>
<a href="#">Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR)</a>	<a href="#">Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies</a>	Dhaka, Bangladesh
<a href="#">Center for Advancing Microbial Risk Assessment (CAMRA)</a>	Michigan State University; Carnegie Mellon University; Drexel University; Northern Arizona University; University of Arizona; University of California at Berkeley; University of Michigan	East Lansing, Michigan, United States
<a href="#">Center for Applied Counterterrorism Studies (CACS)</a>	<a href="#">University of North Carolina at Charlotte</a>	Charlotte, North Carolina, United States
<a href="#">Center for Asymmetric Warfare (CAW)</a>	<a href="#">Naval Postgraduate School</a>	Monterey, California, United States
<a href="#">Center for Counter-Terrorism Studies</a>	<a href="#">China Institute of Contemporary International Relations</a>	Beijing, China
<a href="#">Center for Interdisciplinary Policy, Education, and Research on Terrorism (CIPERT)</a>	Center for Homeland Defense and Security and the Center on Terrorism and Irregular Warfare, Naval Postgraduate School; Pacific Graduate School of Psychology	
<a href="#">Center for International Research on Terrorism (ITRC)</a>	University of Cincinnati; Turkish National Police Organization	
<a href="#">Center for Law and Counterterrorism (CLC)</a>	<a href="#">Foundation for Defense of Democracies</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Center for Policing Terrorism (CPT)</a>	<a href="#">Manhattan Institute</a>	New York City, New York, United States
<a href="#">Center for Terrorism Law (CTL)</a>	<a href="#">St. Mary's University</a>	San Antonio, Texas, United States
<a href="#">Center for Terrorism Research (CTR)</a>	<a href="#">Foundation for Defense of Democracies</a>	Wollongong, Australia

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<b>Centre Project, Program, Issue</b>	<b>Affiliated Organisation, Institute</b>	<b>Location</b>
<a href="#">Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation</a>		Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Center on Terrorism</a>	<a href="#">John Jay College of Criminal Justice</a>	New York City, New York, United States
<a href="#">Center on Terrorism and Counterterrorism</a>	<a href="#">Foreign Policy Research Institute</a>	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States
<a href="#">Center on Terrorism and Irregular Warfare</a>	<a href="#">Naval Postgraduate School</a>	Monterey, California, United States
<a href="#">Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies (CATS)</a>	<a href="#">Swedish National Defence College</a>	Stockholm, Sweden
<a href="#">Centre for Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (PICT)</a>	<a href="#">Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia</a>	Sydney, Australia
<a href="#">Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Contemporary Political Violence (CSRV)</a>	<a href="#">Aberystwyth University</a>	Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, United Kingdom
<a href="#">Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism (CTC)</a>	<a href="#">Campus The Hague of Leiden University, Netherlands</a>	The Hague, Netherlands
<a href="#">Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV)</a>	<a href="#">University of St. Andrews, Scotland</a>	St. Andrews, Scotland
<a href="#">Centre for the Study of Terrorism (CFSOT)</a>		London, England
<a href="#">Center for the Study of Youth and Political Violence</a>	<a href="#">University of Tennessee - Knoxville</a>	Knoxville, Tennessee, United States
<a href="#">Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention (CTCP)</a>		Wollongong, Australia
<a href="#">Center for Higher Study on the Struggle against Terrorism and Political Violence (Centro Alti Studi per a Lotta al Terrorismo e alla Violenza Politica)</a>		Rome, Italy
<a href="#">Charity &amp; Security Network (CSN)</a>		Washington, DC, United States

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<b>Centre Project, Program, Issue</b>	<b>Affiliated Organisation, Institute</b>	<b>Location</b>
<a href="#">Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism (CPOST)</a>	<a href="#">University of Chicago</a>	Chicago, Illinois, United States
<a href="#">Columbia University World Trade Center Archive Project</a>	<a href="#">Columbia University</a>	New York City, New York, United States
<a href="#">Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point</a>	<a href="#">United States Military Academy</a>	West Point, New York, United States
<a href="#">Consortium for Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CCFT)</a>		Singapore
<a href="#">Consortium for Strategic Communication (CSC)</a>	<a href="#">Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, Arizona State University</a>	Tempe, Arizona, United States
<a href="#">Counterterrorism and Homeland Security</a>	<a href="#">Cato Institute</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative</a>	<a href="#">American Strategy Program, New American Foundation</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Counterterrorism Topic</a>	<a href="#">Human Rights Watch</a>	New York City, New York, United States
<a href="#">Dark Web Terrorism Research</a>	<a href="#">Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Eller College of Management, University of Arizona</a>	Tucson, Arizona, United States
<a href="#">Future of Terrorism Project (FTP)</a>	<a href="#">Foundation for Defense of Democracies</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">GCC Security and Terrorism Issues Research Program</a>	<a href="#">Gulf Research Center</a>	
<a href="#">Global Terrorism Analysis Program</a>	<a href="#">Jamestown Foundation</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Global Terrorism Research Centre (GTReC)</a>	<a href="#">Monash University, Australia</a>	Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
<a href="#">Global Terrorism Subtopic</a>	<a href="#">National Security Issue, Center for American Progress</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Homegrown Terror &amp; Radicalization Topic</a>	<a href="#">Homeland Security Policy Institute, George Washington University</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Program</a>	<a href="#">Defense and Security Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies</a>	Washington, DC, United States

<b>Centre Project, Program, Issue</b>	<b>Affiliated Organisation, Institute</b>	<b>Location</b>
<a href="#">Homeland Security and Terrorism Program</a>	<a href="#">James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University</a>	Houston, Texas, United States
<a href="#">Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (INSCT)</a>	<a href="#">Syracuse University</a>	Syracuse, New York, United States
<a href="#">Institute for the Study of Violent Groups (ISVG)</a>	<a href="#">University of New Haven</a>	New Haven, Connecticut, United States
<a href="#">Institut für Terrorismusforschung &amp; Sicherheitspolitik (IFTUS)</a>		Essen, Germany
<a href="#">Institute of Terrorism Research and Response (ITRR)</a>		Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States
<a href="#">Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE)</a>	<a href="#">Organization of American States</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">International Association for Counterterrorism &amp; Security Professionals (IACSP)</a>		
<a href="#">International Center for Terrorism Studies (ICTS)</a>	<a href="#">Potomac Institute for Policy Studies</a>	Arlington, Virginia, United States
<a href="#">International Center for the Study of Terrorism (ICST)</a>	<a href="#">Pennsylvania State University</a>	State College, Pennsylvania, United States
<a href="#">International Center of Terror Medicine</a>	<a href="#">Hadassah Medical Center</a>	Jerusalem, Israel
<a href="#">International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR)</a>	<a href="#">S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore</a>	Singapore
<a href="#">International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR)</a>	<a href="#">King's College, London; University of Pennsylvania; Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya; Jordan Institute of Diplomacy</a>	London, England
<a href="#">International Institute for Counterterrorism (ICT)</a>	<a href="#">Interdisciplinary Center Center</a>	Herzliya, Israel
<a href="#">Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT)</a>		

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<b>Centre Project, Program, Issue</b>	<b>Affiliated Organisation, Institute</b>	<b>Location</b>
<a href="#">Italian Team for Security, Terroristic Issues &amp; Managing Emergencies (ITSTIME)</a>	<a href="#">Catholic University of Milan</a>	Milan, Italy
<a href="#">Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre</a>		London, England
<a href="#">Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor (JTTM)</a>	<a href="#">Middle East Media Research Institute</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Mackenzie Institute</a>		Toronto, Ontario, Canada
<a href="#">Maritime Terrorism Research Center</a>		
<a href="#">Meir Amit Intelligence &amp; Terrorism Information Center (ITIC)</a>	<a href="#">Israel Intelligence Heritage &amp; Commemoration Center</a>	Gelilot, Israel
<a href="#">Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT)</a>		Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, United States
<a href="#">Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program (MonTREP)</a>	<a href="#">Monterey Institute of International Studies</a>	Monterey, California, United States
<a href="#">National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease Defense (FAZD Center)</a>	<a href="#">Texas A&amp;M University</a>	College Station, Texas, United States
<a href="#">National Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE)</a>	<a href="#">University of Southern California</a>	Los Angeles, California, United States
<a href="#">National Center on the Psychology of Terrorism (NCPT)</a>	<a href="#">Center for Interdisciplinary Policy, Education, and Research on Terrorism</a>	
<a href="#">National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)</a>	<a href="#">University of Maryland</a>	College Park, Maryland, United States
<a href="#">National Terrorism Preparedness Institute (NTPI)</a>	<a href="#">St. Petersburg College</a>	St. Petersburg, Florida, United States
<a href="#">Nine Eleven Finding Answers (NEFA) Foundation</a>		Washington, DC, United States

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<b>Centre Project, Program, Issue</b>	<b>Affiliated Organisation, Institute</b>	<b>Location</b>
<a href="#">Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, Inc. (PIPVTR)</a>		Teachers Village East, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
<a href="#">Program for Terrorism Research &amp; Studies</a>	<a href="#">Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University</a>	Cairo, Egypt
<a href="#">Program on International Terrorism</a>	<a href="#">Eleano Royal Institute</a>	Madrid, Spain
<a href="#">Project Fikra</a>	<a href="#">Washington Institute for Near East Policy</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Quilliam Foundation</a>		London, England
<a href="#">Radicalization Watch Project (RWP)</a>	<a href="#">Center for Advanced Defense Studies</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Russia-Eurasia Terror Watch (RETWA)</a>		
<a href="#">Society for Terrorism Research (STR)</a>		Boston, Massachusetts, United States
<a href="#">Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence</a>	<a href="#">Washington Institute for Near East Policy</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC)</a>	<a href="#">George Mason University</a>	Fairfax, Virginia, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism &amp; National Security</a>	<a href="#">Nelson Center for International and Public Affairs, James Madison University</a>	Harrisonburg, Virginia, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism &amp; Preparedness Data Resource Center</a>	<a href="#">University of Michigan Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research</a>	Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism and Counter-Radicalization Issue</a>	<a href="#">Carnegie Endowment for International Peace</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism and Crime Studies</a>	<a href="#">Federal Research Division, Library of Congress</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism and Homeland Security Research Area</a>	<a href="#">RAND Corporation</a>	
<a href="#">Terrorism and Internal Security Research Cluster</a>	<a href="#">Institute for Defence Studies &amp; Analyses</a>	New Delhi, India

<b>Centre Project, Program, Issue</b>	<b>Affiliated Organisation, Institute</b>	<b>Location</b>
<a href="#">Terrorism Issue</a>	<a href="#">Council on Foreign Relations</a>	New York City, New York, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism Issue</a>	<a href="#">Heritage Foundation</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism Issue</a>	<a href="#">Institute of Peace &amp; Conflict Studies</a>	New Delhi, India
<a href="#">Terrorist Media Project</a>	<a href="#">Foundation for Defense of Democracies</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism Page</a>	<a href="#">Anti-Defamation League</a>	New York City, New York, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism Program</a>	<a href="#">Center for Defense Information</a>	Washington, DC, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism Research Center (TRC)</a>	<a href="#">Fulbright College, University of Arkansas</a>	Fayetteville, Arkansas, United States
<a href="#">Terrorism Research Center, Inc. (TRC)</a>		
<a href="#">Terrorism Topic</a>	<a href="#">Human Rights Watch</a>	New York City, New York, United States
<a href="#">Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security (TCTHS)</a>	Duke University; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; RTI International	Durham, North Carolina, United States
<a href="#">Unconventional Warfare Study Center</a>		
<a href="#">US-Russia Initiative to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism</a>	<a href="#">Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University</a>	Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States
<a href="#">Violence and Extremism Programme</a>	<a href="#">Demos</a>	London, England
<a href="#">Violent Intranational Political Conflict &amp; Terrorism Research Laboratory (VIPCAT)</a>	<a href="#">Institute for the Theory and Practice of International Relations, College of William and Mary</a>	Williamsburg, Virginia, United States

<b>Centre Project, Program, Issue</b>	<b>Affiliated Organisation, Institute</b>	<b>Location</b>
<a href="#">WMD &amp; CBRN Terrorism Topic</a>	<a href="#">Homeland Security Policy Institute, George Washington University</a>	Washington, DC, United States

## Selected Literature on Terrorism and CBRN Threats

*Monographs, Edited Volumes, Non-conventional Literature and Prime Articles published since 2000,*

### Selected and Compiled by Eric Price

(Professional Information Specialist)

NB: some of the items listed below are clickable and allow access to the full text; those with an asterisk [\*] only have a clickable table of contents.

Adelman, D.S. & Legg, T.J. (2009). *Disaster nursing: a handbook for practice*. Sudbury, Mass.; Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

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Dolnik, A. (2007). *Understanding terrorist innovations: technology, tactics and global trends*. New York, NY.; Routledge.

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Gowen, A.E. (2004). *Surviving terrorism: recognition and response guide to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks*. Lawrenceville, NJ.: Pinninti.

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James, A. D. (Ed.) (2006). *Science and technology policies for the anti-terrorism era*.

[Proceedings of the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on Science & Technology Policies for the Anti-Terrorism Era. Manchester, United Kingdom, 12-14 September 2004]

[\*<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/fy0709/2006929619.html>]

Jane's Information Group (2011). *Jane's NBC Defence Systems*. Coulsdon, Surrey; Jane's Information Group.

Johnson, T.A. (Ed.) (2007). *National security issues in science, law, and technology*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

[\*<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip073/2006035229.html>]

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Langford, R.E. (2004) *Introduction to weapons of mass destruction: radiological, chemical, and biological*. Hoboken, N.J.; Wiley-Interscience.

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[\*<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/fy0711/2003275909.html>]

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[\*<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0825/2007943836-t.html>]

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[\*<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip066/2005037935.html>]

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[\*<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0708/2007005124-t.html>]

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[[http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/official\\_docs/inventory/pdfs/g8.pdf](http://www.nti.org/e_research/official_docs/inventory/pdfs/g8.pdf)]

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## Book Reviews

**Alison Pargeter. *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Burden of Tradition***

**London: Saqi, 2010. 300 pp. ISBN: 978-0863564758 (hbk). £20. Reviewed by Richard Phelps**

The Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin), founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, is a controversial organisation precisely due to its ambiguity. It is vocal, yet secretive; it is transnational and led by one 'General Guide', but has a different history in each country; it is said to be non-violent, but often endorses violence. The group seeks to contest elections, yet is far from internally democratic and would prefer to exclude Christians and women from being a country's president. Amid this incertitude, this highly lucid and approachable analysis of the Brotherhood offers a welcome degree of clarity. It is not another Egyptian-centric history of the movement; instead, Alison Pargeter (University of Cambridge) offers a more global picture of the trajectories the movement has taken in the Arab world and in Europe. Based on important internal documents, and - crucially - a remarkable array of on-the-record interviews with senior Brotherhood personnel, Pargeter allows the Brothers to do much of the talking.

The relationship between Syria and the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, captures many of the organisation's paradoxes. Unlike in Egypt, where the Brethren represent the deepest-rooted opposition to the regime and to its relationship with Israel, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood can hardly play the 'Palestine card' against a regime that for decades has been at war with Israel and championed the Palestinians' armed struggle. Nor do the Syrian Ikhwan represent an entrenched opposition to the Asad regime. Beyond the events that culminated in the regime's assault on the city of Hama in February 1982, the Brotherhood's history in Syria is little-known. Pargeter's chapter adds much to the scarce literature on the topic by examining the internal dynamics of the movement. After being crushed at the cost of tens of thousands of lives in Hama, Syria's Islamists have been an opposition in exile, increasingly alienated from politics inside the country. In a marriage of convenience, they even joined forces with defectors from the secular Ba'thist regime, such as the disaffected former vice president 'Abd al-Halim Khaddam at one time. Whilst elsewhere the Brotherhood's objective may be to win power, the Syrian Brotherhood's priority is to engineer a return from exile.

At the same time though, the Asad regime plays host to a pantheon of Islamist organisations from abroad such as Hamas, Hizballah and Islamic Jihad, welcomed by Damascus as disruptive assets in the service of Syrian foreign policy. Herein lies one salient feature of politics in the Arab world: regimes that tolerate minimal dissent from their own Islamists often play host to dissenters unwelcome elsewhere. Many of Syria's Brethren were welcomed in Jordan and Iraq, many of Egypt's were welcomed in Saudi Arabia, and many from all Arab states have found refuge in Europe.

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The Brotherhood's presence in Europe raises a whole different set of issues. As dissidents fleeing authoritarian regimes, many of its activists have found refuge in Western democracies. Yet being a challenger to a despot does not make one a democrat. Whereas in the Arab world the Brotherhood's members represent sizeable constituencies in societies that are often un-enfranchised but should not be ignored, in Europe the opposite is often true. Here, though vocal, the Brotherhood does not represent the bulk of European Muslims but nevertheless receives a disproportionate amount of limelight. It is predominantly an organisation of the Arab educated classes, whilst most British Muslims, for example, are of South Asian origin and most German Muslims are of Turkish origin. Nevertheless, the Brotherhood's advocates market themselves as responsible interlocutors, while often remaining cagey about their precise relationship to the Brotherhood's ideology.

The Brotherhood's slipperiness has made it its own worst enemy. It disavows the revolutionary urgency of its best-known martyr, Sayyid Qutb; yet as its most accomplished ideologue he is too prominent to be rejected wholesale. Nor has any other Brotherhood ideologue been able to surpass Qutb; in fact the most sophisticated Islamist thinkers have tended to move away from the Brotherhood. It likewise presents itself as a bulwark against Al-Qaeda's militancy, yet it also advocates violent jihad in defence of Muslims in Iraq, Palestine and elsewhere. Its populism provokes anxiety. Committed militants see the Brotherhood as opportunists who cynically champion popular issues simply to rivet themselves to their popularity without ever actually standing in the frontline. In this way, the General Guide's promise to send 10,000 volunteers to defend Lebanon from the Israeli invasion in 2006 was nothing but flimsy bombast. Its practical role in supporting the Palestinian armed struggle or the Iraqi resistance has been minimal. On the other hand, endorsing violence whilst presenting itself as the face of 'moderation' and agitating for electoral participation – all this has encouraged its critics to view it as a Trojan horse opportunistically exploiting democratic electoral mechanisms whilst remaining profoundly undemocratic.

Such flak is not without substance. Pargeter rejects the argument that supporting the Brotherhood can serve as a vaccine that can preclude violent extremism. Experience shows that the reverse is true, she claims. In her exploration of issues that are both murky and subtle, the author treads carefully. The book's value lies in showing how experiences differ from country to country: e.g. during the Gulf War many branches of the Brotherhood appealed to popular sentiments and vocally denounced the American intervention, yet the Kuwaiti Brotherhood saw this as a colossal betrayal and even suspended its international affiliation. The movement's populism and sloganeering that 'Islam is the solution' account for the Brethren's longevity and popularity as much as its Janus-faced nature. Be it democracy, charity, or violence, whatever the Brotherhood does itself commit to, there are others from its ranks or surrounding who push such commitments further. Throughout the last century, the Brotherhood was an influential piece of political furniture in the Arab world. There is no sign of it dissipating; yet as time goes on and the organisation itself develops in different directions, uncertainty will doubtless persist as to the 'true' face of the Muslim Brotherhood.

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**Richard Phelps** is a research fellow at Quilliam.

**Scott Atran. Talking to the Enemy. Faith, Brotherhood, and the (UN) Masking of Terrorists. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010. 540 pp. ISBN: 978-0-06-13440—9 US \$ 27.99 Reviewed by Alex P. Schmid**

The sad truth about terrorism research is that 99% of all those who write about the subject have never talked to a terrorist, not even an imprisoned one. There are a few exceptions and the author of this ambitious volume, Scott Atran, is one. He is an anthropologist by training. While anthropology's main method of investigation - "participatory observation" - should not be taken too literally when it comes to the field of terrorism studies, it gets the investigator as close to his object of study as one can get without "going native". As Atran puts it: "It is possible to empathize with jihadi warriors and believers without needing to sympathize or share their conviction" (p.36) There are plenty of obstacles and dangers that face the inquisitive researcher, including being kidnapped for ransom or murdered for impressing some third party. Scott Atran is a maverick researcher with institutional academic affiliations in both France and the United States. He has followed terrorists in Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, as well as in courtrooms in Europe. His book is not primarily written for fellow-academics but is meant for a broader public.

In 'Talking to the Enemy', Atran tries to combine a macro-perspective on the origins of conflicts that have produced terrorism with micro-portraits taken on the ground in conversations with terrorists and their supporters. Doing such a splits makes the volume less than perfect in terms of composition. His macro-perspectives with brief excursions into centuries of history are not the volumes strongest features. Yet where the book excels is in the portrait of the anthropologist at work; it gives us a unique glimpse into the practice of an academic professional engaged in fieldwork. Traditionally, anthropologists have studied kin and tribal networks. It so happens that family networks (and neighbourhood- and school-based ties) are also a key to understanding many terrorist networks. He notes that in some jihadist circles "friends tend to marry one another's sisters and cousins" (p.36). At times, Atran's findings stand in sharp opposition to mainstream assumptions on salafist jihadi terrorism. For example, he writes: "The idea that joining jihad is a carefully calculated decision or that people are 'brainwashed' or 'recruited' into 'cells' or 'councils' by 'organizations' with 'infrastructures' that can be hit and destroyed is generally wrong" (p.50). Or: "...there's no indication that Al Qaeda ever had the capability to acquire such weapons [of mass destruction, AS], and it has such ability much less now than before" (p.101). He is, however, less certain about Lashkar -e- Toiba, whose spiritual leader Hafiz Saeed declared that "mass killing of nonbelievers is the only solution to international conflicts in the Muslims' favor"(p.236).

At times Atran's method of investigation is reminiscent of investigative reporters. In his judgments he is not afraid of reaching definitive conclusions. For instance, regarding the Madrid bombing of 11 March 2004, he writes: "The Madrid plot was incubated by a hodgepodge of childhood friends, teenage buddies, neighborhood pals, prison cellmates, siblings, cousins and lovers. These weren't careful, well-trained commandos. They were almost laughably incompetent, though tragically only a bit less so than Spanish law enforcement and

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intelligence” (p.206). In his comment on U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s announcement to the Taliban in the summer of 2009 that “We and our Afghan allies stand ready to welcome anyone supporting the Taliban who renounces Al-Qaeda, lays down their arms....etc.”, he dryly notes: “To get the tribesmen to lay down arms ...is about as farfetched as getting the [US] National Rifle Association to support a constitutional repeal of Americans’ right to bear arms. Moreover, as Marc Sageman observes, “there’s no Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and no Afghans in Al Qaeda” (p.258). The book arrives at a number of conclusions that contradict mainstream views. With reference to the situation in Europe, he notes: “Generally...people go looking for Al Qaeda, not the other way round”.(...) The overwhelming majority have not had sustained prior religious education but have become “born again” into radical Islam in their late teens and early twenties”. (p.272) The last section of the book looks at the role of religion in terrorism. Despite being a confessed atheist himself, Atran does not come down harshly on religion, noting that “Islam and religious ideology per se aren’t the principal causes of suicide bombing and terror in today’s world...”(p.425). What, in his view, inspires terrorists is “a thrilling experience and call to action that promises glory and esteem in the eyes of friends, and, through friends, eternal respect and remembrance in the wider world that they will never live to enjoy.” Yet he also reminds those who seek such glory:” Because the young, feeling immortal, do not fathom how short and fragile life and memory are – even remembrance of heroes – or how forever long are death and forgetfulness. They don’t understand that their deaths are staged so that stories will be broadcast, not about them – they are as nameless as their victims – but about the Cause” (p.483). Atran has given us a remarkably honest book, demonstrating that down-to-earth field work can give us a far superior understanding of what makes terrorists “tick” than whole armies of armchair counter-terrorist ‘experts’ from profit-oriented consultancy firms eager to get their funding from often clueless Homeland Security bureaucrats.

## About Perspectives on Terrorism

PT seeks to provide a unique platform for established scholars as well as academics and professionals entering the field of Terrorism, Political Violence and Conflict Studies. It invites them to:

- present their perspectives on the prevention of, and response to, terrorism and related forms of violent conflict;
- submit to the journal accounts of evidence-based, empirical scientific research and analyses;
- use the journal as a forum for debate and commentary on issues related to the above.

*Perspectives on Terrorism* (PT) could be characterized as ‘nontraditional’ in that it dispenses with some of the traditional rigidities associated with commercial print journals. Topical articles can be published at short notice and reach, through the Internet, a much larger audience than fee-based subscription journals. Our on-line journal also offers contributors a higher degree of flexibility in terms of content, style and length of articles - but without compromising professional scholarly standards. While aiming to be policy-relevant, PT is not supporting any partisan policies regarding (counter-) terrorism and conflict-waging. Impartiality, objectivity and accuracy are guiding principles we expect contributors to adhere to.

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synergies that can extend the impact of each participant's research endeavours.

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