De-legitimizing Religion as a Source of Identity-Based Security Threats in a Global World

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Introduction

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Since the ancient Jewish *Zealot*, both terrorism as such and its most familiar version today, religious terrorism, have had different models, justifications, and moments of proliferation. Although we do not need to engage in a lengthy legal discussion of what constitutes terrorism, it would be useful to have a working definition. The word *terrorism* comes from the Latin *terrere* ("to cause to tremble"), and its political usage (with a decidedly positive connotation) started during the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution. *Terror* in that usage referred to an assault on civil order. Among the many different and conflicting definitions of terrorism, this paper accepts the following: *Terrorism* is violence or the threat of violence used and directed in pursuit of a political aim.[1] Although this definition is very general, any attempt to qualify it further inevitably raises issues of political conviction.[2]

In a similar vein, terrorist activities could be categorized in various ways. Here is one possibility:[3]

- *Repressive Terrorism.* Traditional forms of right-wing terrorism could be included in this category. Examples are the Ku Klux Klan, the Sicilian Mafia, the death squads of Latin American countries, and the Grey Wolves of Turkey.

- *Insurrectional Terrorism.* This category would include ethnic and national separatist movements aimed at independence. Examples are FLN-Algeria, Irgun and Stern in British Palestine, the PLO, Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, various Chechen groups, ETA in Spain, the IRA, etc.

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[1] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 15.

[2] For alternative definitions and a general debate on definitions of terrorism, see Hoffman*, Inside Terrorism*, 13–45; David Rappoport, "Terrorism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, Vol. 2, Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan, eds. (London: Routledge, 1992); Alex P. Schmid, Albert J. Jongman, et al., *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1998), 1–38; Jessica Stern, *The Ultimate Terrorists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 11–31.

[3] From Henner Hess, "Like Zealots and Romans: Terrorism and Empire in the 21st Century," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 39 (2003): 341–43.

- *Social-Revolutionary Terrorism.* Traditional left-wing terrorist movements might be counted in this group. Examples are GRAPO (Spain), Action Directe (France), Red Army Faction (Germany), Red Brigades (Italy), Weathermen (U.S.), and DHKP-C (Turkey).

These terrorist movements and groups have been rather local in their impacts. Their actions were caused by and restricted to primarily local (at most national) issues. They usually have targeted small numbers of victims, which were not chosen randomly. Social-revolutionary terrorists pursued progressive (albeit distorted) ideals such as progress, liberty, and equality. For insurrectional terrorists, the ideal was closer to Wilsonian self-determination.[4] "The danger they posed as far as weapons and other potentials were concerned was not particularly frightening. They abducted and murdered important politicians, leading industrialists," soldiers and police.[5] Insurrectional movements did not, for the most part, kill indiscriminately and wholesale, because they were trying to win the hearts and minds of people—they had a constituency to win, so to speak.

The last decade has seen this picture change dramatically. Terrorism has become much more diversified, virulent, and dangerous. Political and ideological motivations, however far-fetched, receded and became overshadowed by repressive, fundamentalist religious ideologies, which fuel a much more lethal version of terrorism.[6] Before 1980, the U.S. State Department's list of international terrorist groups only occasionally listed religious groups.[7] In contrast, when U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright listed thirty of the world's most dangerous groups in 1998, over half were religiously oriented.[8] Similar lists have reached similar conclusions since then: terrorist acts related to, or in the name of, religion and/or religious identities have become one of the most serious security challenges since the end of the Cold War or, as some would say, since the advent of modern, technology-driven globalization. Though most lists of terrorist organizations now include Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and various cult-related religious fundamentalist groups, in this essay our focus is on Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, which has become more prominent than other types of terrorism and now has a global reach.

Although this phenomenon reaches back to last decades of the nineteenth century, what Oliver Roy has called "neo-fundamentalism" emerged in the 1980s during the

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[4] Hess, "Like Zealots and Romans," 345.

[5] Ibid., 346.

[6] Ibid.

[7] In 1992, there were eleven religious terrorist groups in the lists. The 1994 report listed sixteen such groups out of the forty-nine terrorist organizations. The ratio reached sixteen out of fifty-six in 1995. Groups motivated at least in part by religion committed ten of the one hundred most lethal terrorist attacks in 1996; and the figures continued to grow. See, Bruce Hoffman, "Old Madness, New Methods; Revival of Religious Terrorism Begs for Broader U.S. Policy," *Rand Review* 22:2 (Winter 1998/99): 3. Available at: http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/rr.winter98.9/methods.html.

[8] "Global Terror," *Los Angeles Times* (8 August 1998), A16.

Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution, and resulted in the defeat and/or humiliation of two superpowers.[9] If religion was powerful enough to defeat or thwart the world's most powerful states in two different locations, perhaps it could also offer a challenge during the era of globalization.[10] Thus it is perhaps not surprising that religion should emerge as a far more common motivation for terrorism in the post-Cold War era. Old ideologies lie discredited by the twin exemplars of the collapse of the Soviet Union and communist ideology and the failures of liberal democratic capitalist states to produce economic benefits in many countries. Thus, religious ideology and its counterpart, fundamentalist extremism, offer promise for the future, and alternatives to the failures of the past.

Accordingly, this paper will look first at the growing connection between religious identities, globalization, and terrorism. Within that framework, the role of Islam will take precedence. The essay will look critically at the connection between Islam as a religion and Islam as a threat in the globalized world, where some people are driven by economic insecurity and political dislocations to turn to deeper religious and ethnic identities. Then the paper will try to clarify the differences between the new form of religious terrorism and its older, more secular predecessor. Finally, the essay will turn to the challenges we face in countering religious terrorism today and suggest a possible two-way strategy.

Identity-Based Security Threats in a Globalized World and the Role of Islam

With the spread of globalization, and since the emergence of the new type of terrorism we witnessed on 9/11, religious identities have gained renewed attention. The divisive character of many faiths and the ability of religious identities to create conflicts between groups have been studied from different perspectives. Among discussions regarding religious fundamentalism as a source of terrorism, Islam has attracted particular attention ranging from Samuel Huntington's now (in)famous work on the "clash of civilizations" to George W. Bush's flashbacks to a Western "crusade" against terrorists.[11] We live in a world where names like *al-Jihad*, *Islamic Jihad*, *Gamaa Islamiyya*, *Hizb-ut Tahrir*, *Army of God*, *Islamic Liberation Front*, *Armed Islamic Group, Hezbollah*, *Hamas*, and *Al-Qaeda*, make the headlines almost daily in connection with terrorism. Could there be a link between a religion and international terrorism?

When we consider the perpetrators and the violent events that have led to the deaths of many civilians, such as the attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, the massacre of tourists in Luxor, Egypt in 1997, the bombings of U.S. Embassies in Tan-

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9   Oliver Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2002).
10   Rohan Gunaratna, "Responding to the Post 9/11 Structural and Operational Challenges of Global Jihad," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 4:1 (Spring 2005): 10.
11   Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (Summer 1993): 22–49; and *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

zania and Kenya in 1998, the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. in September 2001, as well as bombings in Madrid (2004), Istanbul (2004), and London (2005), it is possible to rather unavoidably (and all too easily) establish a connection between the use of terror and Islam. Although this shallow analysis—focusing solely on the deeds of extremists, and generalizing them to the entire Islamic world—is misguided at best, it nevertheless has its attractions in many parts of the world.

Islam is sometimes used as a tool of self-identification and psychological support for extremist religious groups associated with threats directed at political, societal, economic, and human security at the national, regional, or global levels. However, it is clearly wrong to suggest that a unified, monolithic Islamic civilization is threatening the world. Accordingly, this paper looks critically at the connection between Islam as a religion and Islam as a threat in a globalized world where peoples' resort to deeper religious and ethnic identities came to the fore. It is my contention here that an "Islamic threat" based on a Huntingtonian version of a civilizational identity is a myth. Nevertheless, I also accept that some radical and extremist groups, imagining identities based on Islam as a religion, might pose threats to the security of wider international society. The dynamics of globalization that culminated in the resurgence of religion as a social and political phenomenon, along with the decline of the long-demonized communist threat with the end of the Cold War and finally the tragic events of 9/11, have led many to question Islam's relationship with terrorism threat.

From Myth to Reality: Islamic Extremism and the Terrorist Threat

When Islam as a religion lies at the heart of a group's identity, then these groups might potentially pose threats to security under certain conditions. Even though religion remains the major marker of those groups' identities, the threats associated with those groups might not result directly and solely from their religious motivations, but from a combination of social, economic, or political factors. Those groups can be *organizations*, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, or they can even be *states*, like Iran and Libya.

With the end of World War II, when the newly independent states in the Middle East (such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq) began to adopt more secular forms of government—or abandon "Islamic principles and rule," as some would have it—Islamic identity-based organizations or parties became actors in regional and international politics. Islam was regarded by the new governing elites of the region as an "impediment to modernity, progress and development."[12] However, it was soon recognized that Western-built secular regimes often failed to provide political and economic order to these societies. In an environment of bad governance, ongoing conflicts, weak economies, and corruption, the agendas of Islamic identity-based organizations and parties shared similar goals: to achieve the rule of Islamic values in their societies. It should be noted that their intention was not necessarily or always derived from the fact that they

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[12] Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Fundamentalism Since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2005), 32.

wanted to create a world living under Islamist rule; rather, their actions were a response to the corrupt and unpopular regimes in the Middle East.[13]

These Islamic identity-based groups are divided between "liberals" and "fundamentalists," depending on how they apply core Islamic values to modern social and political life. Liberal Islamic organizations or parties, through the processes of *ijtihad* (interpretation) and *fitrah* (natural sense of right or wrong)*,* opt for a modern way of life within the context of Islamic values—creating, for example, a society where complete gender equality prevails. Fundamentalists, on the other hand, resist modernity, restricting themselves to a literal interpretation of sacred texts.[14] To the extent that these liberal or fundamentalist Islamic identity-based groups try to achieve their aims by democratic means, they can only threaten the political security of the governing regimes by challenging their authority and sovereignty. For example, many Islamist groups, "working together with secular parties and using the language of political liberalization, have pressed for political reforms that have led to the elections in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan and Kuwait and to the establishment of a consultative assembly in Saudi Arabia."[15]

However, from a Western point of view, this identity-based threat directed at the political security of the governing elites has more comprehensive repercussions for Western interests. The fear is very simple: by overthrowing the states or governing regimes, these groups will destroy the *status quo* in the Middle East, and thus will jeopardize Western access to oil. In other words, with the Islamist movements gaining strength, the West fears the "transformation of old and reliable friends into more independent and less predictable nations that might make Western access to oil less secure."[16] In this sense, Islamic identity-based groups threaten the economic security of the West when they advocate the overthrow of the governing regimes in the region.

The media, as well as politicians and intellectuals, often associate these groups with radical, violent, and extremist fundamentalists who have caused hundreds of deaths in suicide-bomb attacks across the globe, including the tragic events of 11 September 2001. In this context, it is beyond any doubt that when fundamentalists resort to the use of force, terrorism, and violence rather than pursuing democratic means of change, they pose security threats as understood in the traditional sense. These radical fundamentalists aim at the "ultimate construction of a universal Islamic state," and argue that "jihad is sanctioned by God and it is the only means to resurrect the Islamic state."

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[13] Leon T. Hadar, "What Green Peril?" *Foreign Affairs* 72:2 (Spring 1993): 35.

[14] Fundamentalism is defined as the "strict maintenance of the ancient or fundamental doctrines of any religion or ideology." Another definition would suggest that "fundamentalism indicates a certain intellectual stance that claims to derive political principles from a timeless divine text." It is also defined as a "rejection of modernity and its secular variant in both democratic and non-democratic societies." For all these definitions, see Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Fundamentalism,* 3.

[15] Hadar, "What Green Peril?" 3.

[16] John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 241.

Their final aim is to "spread the word of Allah throughout the world."[17] The Armed Islamic Group in Algeria and Gamaa Islamiyya and Islamic Jihad in Egypt are clear examples of such violent revolutionary groups, along with Hamas and Hezbollah in Palestine and Lebanon, which also posit political dynamics in their movements alongside armed struggle. In the past five years, Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda have been perceived as representing the major threat from groups of this type. Apart from his involvement in the 9/11 attacks, bin Laden is "suspected of funding groups involved in the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, bombings in Riyadh in 1995 and of the Khobar Towers in 1996, the killing of fifty-eight tourists at Luxor as well as the [U.S. Embassy] bombings in Tanzania and Kenya."[18]

In addition to organizations such as Al Qaeda or Islamic Jihad, *states* constructing their identities according to the fundamentalist version of Islam might also present this type of traditional security threat. Iran is a typical case of state-sponsored militant fundamentalism. Since Ayatollah Khomeini seized power in Iran in 1979, the presence of military Islamic fundamentalism has dramatically increased both inside and outside the Muslim world.[19] Exporting the Iranian Islamic Revolution abroad was a central tenet during Khomeini's rule, and using force as well as terrorism was a justified means toward achieving this "holy" aim.[20] Thus, only nine months after the Shah's downfall, the U.S. Embassy in Tehran was occupied, and "student militants" under the watchful eyes of the Khomeini regime held fifty-two hostages for more than four hundred days.[21] Moreover, attacks on the U.S. Marine barracks and French troops in Beirut on 23 October 1983 were also linked to Iranian-backed radical groups in Lebanon.[22] State-supported violent fundamentalism was also linked to the Libyan government in the 1988 explosion of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people.[23]

State-based Islamic militarism is mostly associated with terrorist activities, which does not seem to differ greatly in kind from the threats posed by the Islamic identity-based fundamentalist groups.[24] In reality, however, the threats that those states pose are far more serious, since they have political, economic, and military powers that the

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[17] Hilal Khashan, "The New World Order and the Tempo of Militant Islam," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24:1 (May 1997): 12 and 20.

[18] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 278.

[19] Fereydoun Hoveyda, *The Broken Crescent: The "Threat" of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 1 and 194.

[20] Mohammad Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism: The New Global Threat* (Washington D.C.: SLP, 1993), 114.

[21] Ibid., 20–22.

[22] Khashan, "The New World Order and the Tempo of Militant Islam," 7. Even though direct responsibility for the bombings remains uncertain, Hezbollah—backed by Iran and Syria—has been associated with the Beirut attacks. Though Iranian elements were not directly involved in the incident, the U.S. District Court declared in May 2003 that the Islamic Republic of Iran was responsible for the bombings, on grounds that Iran had originally founded and financed Hezbollah. See www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/05/30/iran.barracks.bombing.

[23] Hoveyda, *The Broken Crescent*, 1.

[24] Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*; and Hoveyda, *The Broken Crescent*.

smaller groups lack. When Islamist militant groups cooperate with those states, such as Islamic Jihad's cooperation with Iran, the repercussions could obviously be much more severe.

Differences between Old and New Terrorism

Some experts argue that distinguishing between different forms of terror as "old" and "new" terrorism is rather superficial, and claim that terrorism has not undergone a change substantial enough to warrant such categorization.[25] Many others, however, do use this contrast in an attempt to characterize a new phase of terrorism, one that is clearly linked to fundamentalist extremism.[26] These experts cite four interrelated features of terrorist acts of the "new" type:

- Extreme brutality
- A frequently suicidal nature
- A war-like character (whereas earlier versions of terrorism bore greater similarity to common crime)
- International and global reach, focused on a global opponent (the United States) and a global issue (establishing a caliphate-state).[27]

Despite the problem of defining terrorism—an issue that appears to be even more difficult and contentious for the so-called "new" terrorism than the traditional type[28]—one could cite characteristics that distinguish the new form from its precursor. In general, the organizational structure of the new terrorist groups seems to be different from the hierarchical and cellular design of the older groups. The new structure is characterized by a highly decentralized network of independent groups. Their vocabulary has become increasingly war-like, and their weaponry has become much more sophisti-

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[25] For a good review of the arguments for and against labeling different forms of terrorism as "old" and "new," see Doron Zimmermann, *The Transformation of Terrorism; The "New Terrorism," Impact Scalability and the Dynamic of Reciprocal Threat Perception*, No 67 (Zurich: Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung, 2003).

[26] Kushner argues that the "new terrorism" has its origins in the Iranian Revolution, after which "Iran embarked on a systematic campaign of supporting militant Islamic fundamentalist movements throughout the Muslim world." Harvey W. Kushner, "The New Terrorism" in *The Future of Terrorism: Violence in the New Millennium*, Kushner, ed. (Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 10.

[27] Hess, "Like Zealots and Romans," 347. For Laqueur, the specificity of the new terrorism derives from three factors: 1) The advanced weaponry they own; 2) New patterns of motive and new types of political violence movements, and; 3) Increasing diffusion of their objectives. See Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4–5.

[28] Zimmermann, *The Transformation*, 10.

cated and deadly, bordering on weapons of mass destruction.[29] The "new" terrorists also appear different from their predecessors in that "they are less educated, usually quite poor and frequently the victims of repression…, are possessed by religious zeal, and less sophisticated in terms of their methods."[30]

For terrorists motivated by religion, "violence is first and foremost a sacramental act or divine duty. Terrorism thus assumes a transcendental dimension, and its perpetrators are consequently undeterred and unrestricted by political, moral, or practical constraints."[31] In contrast, secular terrorists (if we can use such a term) rarely attempt indiscriminate killing on a massive scale, "even when they have the capacity to do so," because "such tactics are inconsistent with their political aims and thus regarded as counterproductive." They would like to have "more people watching than dead."[32] In contrast, religious terrorists carry out large-scale, indiscriminate attacks, often seeking "to eliminate broadly defined categories of enemies" in acts driven by a "morally justi-fied" fanaticism.[33] Religion therefore serves as a legitimizing force. The intended audi-ence of religious terrorists may or may not have human form, and their aims may or may not reflect rationality. What they aim for is favor with God and better conditions for life after death. Thus they are oblivious to the constraints of this life (from which they expect nothing), and are unmoved by and even desire the prospect of death (i.e., martyrdom) while carrying out their terrorist acts.

How to Counter this New Type of Religious Terrorism? [34]

The current wave of religious terrorism presents us with three challenges. The first challenge is to simply identify the terrorists. The current amorphous and decentralized networks of terror often lack the footprints of traditional terrorist organizations, mak-ing it more difficult for intelligence, law enforcement, and other security forces to un-derstand their intentions and capabilities and stop them before they strike.

A second challenge is to unravel the reasons why many previously peaceful reli-gious groups and cults suddenly embark on courses of indiscriminate terrorism. More investigative, intelligence, and academic research must be done before effective deter-rent measures can be considered. Although the traditional counter-terrorism ap-proaches that emphasize police work, leadership targeting, and intelligence sharing are

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[29] Hess, "Like Zealots and Romans", 347–51; and Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 196. Laqueur (*The New Terrorism,* 3–4) argues that, when "seen in historical perspective," terrorism "has seldom been more than a nuisance…. This is no longer true today. … For the first time in history, weapons of enormous destructive power are both readily acquired and harder to track. … In the near future it will be technologically possible to kill thousands, perhaps hun-dreds of thousands, not to mention the toll in panic that is likely to ensue. In brief, there has been a radical transformation, if not revolution, in the character of terrorism."

[30] Zimmermann, *The Transformation*, 25.

[31] Hoffman, "Old Madness, New Methods," 4.

[32] Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 196.

[33] Hoffman, "Old Madness, New Methods," 4–5; and Ian O. Lesser, et al., *Countering New Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1999), vii.

[34] Summarized in large part from Hoffman, "Old Madness, New Methods," 5–8.

still necessary, they have become less relevant and effective as means to combat the new terrorism.[35] Given the religious terrorists' fundamentally alienated world views and often extreme, resolutely uncompromising demands, strategies successfully used in the past—such as political concessions, financial rewards, amnesties, and other personal inducements—would now be not only irrelevant but impractical. Nor are military responses entirely relevant. Even if terrorist groups are militarily destroyed, their ideology may survive, and can even be strengthened by the martyrdom of its servants. Research shows that military responses, while disruptive in the short term, tend to drive terrorists underground, encourage innovation, engender public sympathy, and sometimes even build support for the underdog.

The third challenge is to overcome the profound sense of alienation and isolation of these religious movements. A bridge needs to be built between mainstream society and the extremists so that they do not feel threatened and forced to withdraw into heavily-armed compounds or to engage in preemptive acts of violence directed against what they perceive as menacing, predatory societies. Preemptive educational programs to mitigate grassroots alienation and polarization of societies are important to stop the spread of intolerant beliefs before they take hold and can be exploited by extremists.

To counter this new kind of terrorism, a two-way strategy—one that is both top-down and bottom-up—could be suggested. Working from the top down, the international community should cooperate to de-legitimize state-sponsored terrorism.[36] This strategy addresses a situation in which most of the "new" terrorists often appear to be the victims of oppression at the hands of either their own states or an occupier, real or imagined.

Second, collaboration among states is no longer sufficient to fight the new terrorism. What is needed is an international real-time coordination of security forces, which is hard (if not impossible) to achieve. Efforts to reinforce and broaden prohibitions against the funding of terrorist organizations must also be implemented. Lacking political and financial support from other states, terrorists would not be able to move so freely and inflict widespread damage.

De-politicizing the definition of terrorism is also a crucial step. This would create objective judgments for state commitments. As it is, the old adage "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" continues to be true despite countless attempts to produce a workable definition of *terrorism* and *terrorists*. One attempt to define the terms can be found in the *Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism*, which says, "All cases of struggle by whatever means, including armed struggle, against foreign occupation and aggression for liberation and self-determination, in accordance with the principles of international law, shall not be regarded as a [terrorist] offense. This provision shall not apply to any act prejudicing the territorial integrity of any

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[35] Mona Yacoubian and Paul Stares, "Rethinking War on Terror," *USIPeace Briefing* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, September 2005), 1. Available at www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2005/0907_terror.html.

[36] For details, see, Steven Simon and Jeff Martini, "Terrorism: Denying Al Qaeda Its Popular Support," *The Washington Quarterly* 28:1 (Winter 2004-05): 136–38.

Arab state."[37] According to this interpretation, unless Arab League members are threatened, "liberation movements"—regardless of how they operate or who they target—would not be considered "terrorism."

Finally, it should not be forgotten that the term *democratization* encompasses more than elections. Democracy is based on values, institutions, and the rule of law, elements that enable and further the progress of civil society.[38] By the same token, it is clear that democratization alone cannot solve the problem of fundamentalist terrorism; elections alone would not mean democratization. First of all, Al Qaeda and like-minded groups are not fighting for democracy in the Muslim world—they are fighting to impose their vision of an Islamic state. Moreover, terrorist organizations are not mass-based structures, and they are not organized according to democratic principles. They coalesce around strong leaders and a few dedicated followers. Most often, one would not expect that, when these groups lose elections, they would simply move into political opposition rather than pursue armed militancy.[39] Second, no one can predict the course a new democracy might take. The public opinion surveys and recent elections in the Arab world show that the advent of democratic elections will likely produce new Islamist governments, as was the case in Algeria in the 1990s and in Palestine, where Hamas won elections in January 2006.[40] Third, without the proper liberal political infrastructure, maturation of the political system, and development of strong-rooted secular, nationalist, liberal, and socialist political organizations, elections in most Middle Eastern states will be dominated by religious groups. This would only empower fundamentalists in many Middle Eastern Islamic countries, instead of producing democracies.

To counter terrorism, the bottom-up approach is as necessary as the top-down approach.[41] In this context, terrorist groups should be denied access to their bases of popular support. Governments must be intricately connected to and truly representative of their citizens. When these conditions exist, everyone will be better represented in the system, and democracy (with the caveat above) will have a better chance to succeed. Second, because terrorism is still fundamentally a sub-national, voluntary phenomenon, perceptions must be changed at the community level to prevent terrorism. Changing perceptions would encourage the development of local institutions, particularly universal education, that promote acceptable democratic values. The survival of fundamentalist Islamist networks depends on the continuing appeal of their radical ide-

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[37] Arab League, *The Arab Convention for Suppression of Terrorism*, adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice, Cairo (April 1998). Available at: www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/league/terrorism98.htm.

[38] Moshe Yaalon, "Principles in Countering Terror Threats," address to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Intelligence Summit, Arlington, VA (19 February 2006), 6. Available at: www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=282.

[39] Gregory F. Gause, "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?" *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2005): 4. Available at: www.foreignaffairs.org/20050901faessay84506/f-gregor-gause-iii/.

[40] Ibid., 12.

[41] Simon and Martini, "Terrorism: Denying Al Qaeda Its Popular Support," 138–41.

ology. In the absence of counter-propaganda, both literate and illiterate Muslims view the ideology of global jihad as compatible with Islamic theology. This needs to be countered at the local level with equally strong arguments reclaiming Islam's peaceful heritage from extremist and fundamentalist groups. Neither the Western powers nor secular Muslims can do this. The responsibility here rests with the religious leadership in the Muslim countries. The Western powers will have to confine their role to supporting already existing and growing intellectual movements that are trying to reform Muslim societies.[42]

Curbing terrorists' access to the tools of propaganda (television, press, Internet, etc.) is vital, because propaganda plays a central role in recruiting members and generating support for terrorist organizations. Most liberal Western democracies, which have strong traditions of freedom of expression, tolerate terrorist propaganda up to the point that it becomes violent within their borders. Governments can no longer afford to permit terrorist support networks to exist on the grounds that they pose no direct, immediate threat.

Finally, the social conditions under which terrorists groups are able to flourish and which they use to exploit the frustrations of the disenfranchised should be addressed with a new level of determination. Poverty, lack of social mobility, poor educational infrastructure, and denial of basic human rights all contribute to the hopelessness that terrorists exploit. More importantly, a concerted effort must be made to solve the Muslim world's ongoing conflicts and perceived injustices. The situations in Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir, and Chechnya (to name only a few) fuel the Islamic fundamentalists' arguments. Similarly, alienation of Muslim groups within European countries and elsewhere should be addressed.

Conclusions

Since the events of September 2001, the world has witnessed the tragic character of terrorism emanating from religious fundamentalism. Even though the attacks of 9/11 were carried out by marginalized extremists, Islam, as a religion and way of life, provided the main identifier of that group's sense of self. As one scholar has observed, "Bin Laden and his followers drew on a variety of traditions within political Islam to justify their actions aimed at challenging the Western presence in the Middle East."[43] This suggests that Islamic identity-based security threats derive from the violent terrorist actions of radicals and extremists who construct their identities along Islamic lines. Since their identities are shaped within their understanding of so-called "Islamic traditions," they constantly refer to Islamic concepts such as "jihad" to justify their militant and terrorist actions. Although they usually corrupt and twist the meanings of such concepts, their frequent usage of Islamic terminology nevertheless encourages association of Islam with fundamentalism and even radicalism/terrorism. Thus the per-

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[42] Abdeslam M. Maghraoui, *American Foreign Policy and Islamic Renewal*, Special Report No. 164 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, July 2006), 1.

[43] Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), x.

ception of many Islamic groups in the West as "bearded clerics, gun-wielding and masked supporters of Islam, arms dealers, and a secret world of covert operations and international terrorism" emerges and recreates itself with every new terrorist attack in the name of "Islam."[44]

However, equating fundamentalists with radicals and terrorists is misguided at the outset, and Islam as a religion should not be seen as a threat in itself. This was the logic that forced President Bush to apologize when he inaccurately used the word "crusade" to describe the post-9/11 anti-terrorism campaign, directly connoting a war between the forces of Christendom and Islam. Therefore, a distinction should be made between Islam as a religion and militant Islam as a threat. If this delineation is not clearly drawn, the medieval specter of the religious wars might once again haunt the international order. The "cartoon crisis" of early 2006 attests how easily ridicule can get out of hand in today's distrustful yet interconnected world to ignite a much-dreaded clash between civilizations. In such a case, Huntington's theory would become a sad, self-fulfilling prophecy. Clearly, there is much the world can do to prevent and curb the spread of terrorism and its effects. We need more common sense, a longer attention span, patience, and a resolute response.

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[44] Milton-Edwards, *Islamic Fundamentalism Since 1945*, 9.