

PERSPECTIVES ON TERRORISM

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Who Becomes a Terrorist Today?

By Scott Atran

Introduction: Takfiri Terrorism

Since the invasion of Iraq, and with the rapid spread of Internet access, the world has witnessed a more egalitarian, less-educated and -materially well off, and more socially marginalized wave of would-be jihadi martyrs. Although millions of people support violent jihad, very few are willing to do it. Those who do pursue violent jihad usually emerge in small groups of action-oriented friends. They come from the same neighborhood and interact during activities, such as soccer or paintball. Often they become camping and hiking companions who learn to take care of one another under trying conditions, which causes them to become even more deeply attached. Increasingly, they may first meet in a chat room where the anonymity of the World Wide Web paradoxically helps to forge intimate emotional ties among people who might otherwise physically intimidate or put off one another. They learn to live in a parallel universe — a conceptually closed community of comrades bound to a cause — which they mistake for the world.

These young people self-mobilize to the tune of a simple, superficial, yet broadly appealing “*takfiri*” message of withdrawal from impure mainstream society and the need for violent action to cleanse it. It is a surprisingly flat but fluid message pre-adapted to any new event in the world, which is readily shared by young people I have interviewed from the remote Indonesian Island of Sulawesi, to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta (Septa) in North Africa, and in places scattered throughout Pakistan, Palestine, and the suburbs of Paris.

Takfiris (from *takfir*, “excommunication”) are rejectionists who disdain other forms of Islam, including *wahabism* (an evangelical creed which preaches Calvinist-like obedience to the state) and most fundamentalist, or *salafi*, creeds (which oppose fighting between co-religionists as sowing discord, or *fitna*, in the Muslim community). Salafi Islam is the host on which this viral Takfiri movement rides, much as Christian fundamentalism is the host upon which White Supremacism rides. The host itself is not the cause of the virus and is, indeed, a primary victim. As one senior Saudi intelligence officer recently told me, “Often the first sign of someone becoming a Takfiri is that he stops praying where his family and tribe pray. He leaves the mosque and turns against his family, tribe and our Salafi way.”

One telltale sign of radicalization in the move to Takfirism is when members of a neighborhood mosque or cultural center (or just an informal discussion group that meets at a bookstore or at picnics) gel into a militant faction that leaves, voluntarily or involuntarily. This is what happened, for example, when Ali al-Timimi and his group of paintball buddies were ejected from the Dar al-Arqam Cultural Center in Falls Church, Virginia, after praising the 9/11 attack (12 members of the group were later convicted for aiding Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani group allied to al-Qaeda). Another example is when the soccer-playing Salafi Imam at the M-30 mosque in Madrid expelled Serhane Fakhret and friends (who continued to self-radicalize, playing soccer and picnicking together, in the lead up to the Madrid train bombings).

Western politicians, pundits, and publics generally do not understand that the strict Salafi schools in Indonesia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and elsewhere are the most vociferous and effective opponents of violent jihad. Most present-day Takfiris are “born again” in their late teens and early twenties and have little knowledge of religion beyond the fact that they consider themselves “true Muslims” who must fight enemies near and far to defend their friends and the faith that makes their friendship meaningful and enduring.

Soccer, paintball, camping, hiking, rafting, body building, martial arts training and other forms of physically stimulating and intimate group action create a bunch of buddies (usually not less than 4 and not more than 12, with a median of 8), who become a “band of brothers” in a glorious cause. It usually suffices that a few (usually at least two) of these action buddies come to believe in the cause, truly and uncompromisingly, for the rest to follow even unto death. Humans, like all primates, need to socially organize, lead and be led; however, notions of “charismatic leaders” going out or sending recruiters to “brainwash” unwitting minds into joining well-structured organizations with command and control is grossly exaggerated. Standard counterterrorism notions of “cells” and “recruitment” — and to some degree even “leadership” — often reflect more the psychol-

ogy and organization of people analyzing terrorist groups than terrorist groups themselves.

Such “bureaucratic mirroring” is also evident in misguided policies grounded in the premise that simply presenting people with rational arguments and material incentives will lead them down the correct or better path. Most human beings are more interested in persuading themselves that they are right, whatever the evidence against them, than in finding out that they are wrong. They are more interested in victory than truth. And when was the last time rational argument or a buy-off offer convinced anyone you know to select the right (boy or girl) friend?

Problems with Prevailing Theories of Terrorism: Outdated Data and Inattention to Detail

Alan Krueger, in his new book *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton University Press, 2007), produces data for three general findings: (1) poverty and lack of education are uncorrelated, or slightly negatively correlated, with being a terrorist or support for terrorism; (2) most terrorists stem from countries that are not poor, but that restrict civil liberties; and (3) terrorism is mostly directed against democratic rather than authoritarian regimes. He then infers causes from these broad correlations: (A) poverty and poor education do not produce terrorism, but denial of political freedom does; and (B) terrorists target democratic regimes because terrorists seek publicity and widespread panic and democracies are more responsive to public opinion. These conclusions echo Robert Pape’s best-selling book *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

A major problem with such works is that they assume correlations with economic status, education level, or degree of civil liberties usefully predict who or how people become terrorists. This mistaken premise misleads policymakers and researchers. It is the *social networks* and *group dynamics* of these networks that are critical to understanding how terrorist networks form and operate, not the demographic profiles of individuals and whole populations.

Consider Islamic terrorism, the main focus of Krueger’s book. The significant correlation between the countries of origin of Islamic terrorists and countries that limit civil liberties is true, but uninformative. The same correlation holds for indefinitely many Muslim groups that have nothing to do with terrorism.

Only al-Qaeda is interested in attacking the “far enemy,” that is, the United States and its allies. Isaac Ben Israel, an Israeli parliamentarian who currently heads his country’s space agency, was former chief of air force operations and top military strategist in a successful campaign to stop Hamas suicide bombings. He told me that “al-Qaeda is a very different problem and is not ours; our operational problems with Hezbollah and Hamas involve regional networks with regional aims, although we are ready to help the United States with its global al-Qaeda problem whenever we can.” More than 80 percent of people who have joined or expressed allegiance to al-Qaeda have done so outside their country of origin. This, of course, is not the case with Hezbollah or Hamas. Whether one joins jihad in the diaspora or in one’s native country, and not country of origin *per se*, is the key factor in how one is willing to use terrorism and against whom.

The correlation between terrorist acts and target countries, indicating that democracies are victims more than autocracies, is spurious. It requires accepting that attacks on U.S. occupation forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are attacks upon U.S. democracy. In fact, there have been very few attacks carried out directly against western democracies, and only three with significant casualties (USA-11 September 2001, Spain-11 March 2004, UK-7 July 2005). There have been no major attacks against the democracies of Israel or Indonesia in the last two years, and only one major attack in India outside the disputed territory of Jammu-Kashmir (11/07/06 in Mumbai). There have been 2400 arrests related to Takfiri terrorist activities in Europe, where civil liberties are guaranteed.

Only in Iraq and Afghanistan has there been a continuing high rate of attacks against US-led coalition forces, which are increasingly perceived as occupation forces by large segments of the populations of these two countries. It is doubtful that reaction would be much different if invasion and occupation forces were those of a dictatorship, as with Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The world’s newest and most active areas for suicide attacks are Pakistan and North Africa, where civil liberties are restricted. Over 200 people were killed in

North Africa in 2007, mostly in Algeria. In Pakistan, nearly 500 were killed in suicide attacks in the second half of 2007 (including former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto), greater than the number of people killed in terrorist attacks in Europe over the last two decades. Local groups proclaiming allegiance or sympathy with al-Qaeda have claimed responsibility, but al-Qaeda does not appear to have direct operational command or control over any of these groups.

Consider, now, the relationship between socioeconomic status and terrorism. To independently confirm Krueger's findings on Hamas my research group statistically regressed Palestinian support for suicide attacks against Israelis on education and income levels in three nationally representative surveys of Palestinians (West Bank and Gaza) from 1999, 2001 and 2005. We controlled for area of residence, refugee status, age, gender and religion. Income and education levels were unrelated to support for suicide attacks. When there was a relationship between support for suicide attacks and economic variables we found, like Krueger, that income and education levels are modestly, but *positively* correlated with support. In the 1999 survey, wealthier Palestinians expressed greater support for attacks, while more educated Palestinians showed greater support for suicide attacks in the 2001 surveys.

But when we turn to al-Qaeda's most important Southeast Asian ally *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI), we find something different. We analyzed every attack by Southeast Asia's JI between 1999 and the second Bali bombing of 2005 (apart from the purely local conflicts of Poso and Ambon) and entered demographic details on all known operatives. Of about 180 people implicated in JI attacks, 78 percent worked in unskilled jobs, and only 23 percent had education beyond high school.

We also found that operational associations in JI are determined by four variables: (1) being a member of the self-styled "Afghan Alumni," that is, someone who went through training with the Indonesia volunteers in the Abu Sayyaf's Sadah training camp during the Soviet-Afghan War and its immediate aftermath; (2) continuing to work together (e.g., on Abdullah Sungkar's chicken farm in Malaysia) or to play soccer together after demobilization from Afghanistan (and before JI was officially established); (3) having studied or taught in at least one of the two religious schools established by JI's founders (Al-Mukmin in Java and Lukman Al-Hakim in Malaysia); and (4) being related by kinship or marriage to someone else in the network (e.g., there are more than 30 marriages woven through 10 attacks). In contrast with these factors, we find that the knowledge of JI's "official" organizational structure is largely uninformative in helping us to understand the networks involved in JI attacks.

Levels of education and skill are significantly higher for Hamas than for JI. Nevertheless, the main predictors for involvement in suicide attacks are, again, small-world aspects of social networks and local group dynamics rather than large-scale social, economic, and political indicators, such as education level and economic status. For example, Hamas' most-sustained suicide bombing campaign in 2003-2004 involved several buddies from Hebron's *Masjad* (mosque) *al-Jihad* soccer team. Most lived in the Wad Abu Katila neighborhood and belonged to the al-Qawasmeh hamula (clan); several were classmates in the neighborhood's local branch of the Palestinian Polytechnic College. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years old. At least eight team members were dispatched to suicide shooting and bombing operations by the Hamas military leader in Hebron, Abdullah al-Qawasmeh (killed by Israeli forces in June 2003 and succeeded by his relatives Basel al-Qawasmeh, killed in September 2003, and Imad al-Qawasmeh, captured on October 13, 2004). A closer look at actual attacks reveals that almost all are rooted in local networks of pre-existing social relationships.

In February 2008, I interviewed members of the families of suicide bombers Mohammed Herbawi and Shadi Zghayer, shortly after an attack in Dimona, Israel. This was the first suicide attack claimed by Hamas since December 2004, when Hamas declared a unilateral truce on martyrdom actions across the Green Line. These two friends were members of the same Hamas neighborhood soccer group as several others who died in 2003: the *Masjad al-Jihad* team. Herbawi had been arrested as a 17-year-old on March 15, 2003, shortly after a suicide bombing on Haifa bus (by Mamoud al-Qawasmeh on March 5, 2003) and coordinated suicide shooting attacks on Israeli settlements by others on the team (March 7, 2003, Muhsein, Hazem al-Qawasmeh, Fadi Fahreni, Sufian Hariz) and before another set of suicide bombings by team members in Hebron and Jerusalem on May 17-18, 2003 (Fuad al-Qawasmeh, Basem Takruri, Mujahed al-Ja'abri). Herbawi's mother, Basma Harmoni (she is divorced), said her son loved all those boys.

The Imam at *Masjad al-Jihad*, Fella Naser Ed-Din, is also crazy about soccer (he showed me albums of his soccer team pictures since his boyhood days) and refereed the boys. The Imam told us that the soccer buddies self-organized matches involving 15 mosque teams in the area, naming the matches after martyrs (a painted

sign behind the goalpost at the Abu al-Dhabat school reads “Championship by Martyr Ra’ed Missak,” in honor of the young man from Hebron who killed 23 people and wounded more than 130 on a Jerusalem bus on August 19, 2003). According to the Imam, Muhsein Qawasmeh was the smartest and best of the 2003 team and he inspired the others. I received much the same message from Fawzi Qawasmeh, father of one of the young men, who went on the mission with Muhsein. Hazem Qawasmeh, who went on the mission with Muhsein, stated that “without Muhsein, I doubt the other would have would have acted.” At the house where Muhsein's family now lives, I found his mother and brother commiserating with Herbawi’s uncle. Muhsein’s mother said her son had been an exemplary student but left school after the Intifada broke out and focused on soccer and religion.

The Hamas leadership in Damascus later claimed responsibility for the Dimona attack (after Fatah’s Al-Aqsa’ Martyrs Brigades had claimed it) but the politburo clearly did not order it or even know about it (Usama Hamdan, who handles external relations for Hamas in Beirut, initially said he didn’t know who was responsible; and when I asked senior Hamas leaders in the West Bank if this meant that he didn’t know about it they said, “You can conclude that; we certainly didn’t”). Sources close to Israeli intelligence told me at the Knesset that Mahmoud Zahar, the Hamas leader in Gaza, and Ahmed Al Ja’abri, the military commander of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, probably wanted to launch an operation across the Israel-Egypt border after Hamas breached the border wall between Gaza and Egypt but couldn’t, so al-Ja’abri called upon his clan ally in Hebron, Ayoub Qawasmeh, to do an operation. Ayoub Qawasmeh then tapped into the young men on the soccer team who had been earnestly waiting to do something for their comrades and their cause.

The most complete data in Krueger’s book concerns Hezbollah and Hamas. There is a secondary focus on al-Qaeda. For all three cases, the data is old and of questionable relevance to global terrorism today. Hezbollah ceased suicide bombings and attacks on civilians (outside of open war) by the 1990s. Hamas has claimed responsibility for only one attack since December 2004. al-Qaeda central, the command set up by Osama Bin Laden in the summer of 1988 and which was involved in the 9/11 attacks, has had no direct success in carrying out a terrorist operation since 2002 (the Djerba, Tunisia bombings), though it had a hand in prior financing of operations carried out later (Istanbul bombings 2003) and in training people implicated in subsequent attacks (about 50 suicide bombers involved in attacks in Saudi Arabia through April 2005).

The original al-Qaeda group around Bin Laden (mostly Egyptians) has been decimated by about an order of magnitude. Al-Qaeda’s surviving remnants are mostly concentrated in a handful of small mobile camps in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The largest remaining al-Qaeda camp in 2007, *Mir Ali* in North Waziristan, has had a few dozen trainees under the tutelage of Abu Ubaydah Al-Masri. Al-Masri instructed those responsible for the summer 2006 suicide bombing plot to smuggle liquid explosives aboard a number of passenger jets, and he has likely been involved in a few other dangerous but so-far unsuccessful plots.

For the most part, the “new wave” of terrorism that expresses allegiance to al-Qaeda tends to be poorer, less educated and more marginal than the old al-Qaeda or its remnants. It relies to a greater extent for financing and personnel on pre-existing petty criminal networks because large-scale financing is easily tracked (the attacks on Sept. 11 cost some \$400,000 followed by the 2002 Bali and 2004 bombings at about \$50,000 each, with all others considerably less). The Saudi Ministry of Interior conducted a study of 639 detainees through 2004 and is presently finishing a newer study through 2007. Nearly two-thirds of those in the sample say they joined Jihad through friends and about a quarter through family. A closer look at other terrorist groups reveals strikingly similar patterns of self-radicalization based on almost chance encounters within pre-existing local circles of friends and kin. Former CIA case officer Marc Sageman analyzed Qaeda networks through 2003 and found that about 70 percent join through friends and 20 percent through kin. In his new book *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the 21st Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) Sageman finds that more recent networks are also built up around friendship and kinship but members are more marginal relative to surrounding society.

The newer Saudi sample bears this out. Compared with the earlier sample, the newer wave tends to be somewhat younger (and more likely to be single), less educated and less financially well off, less ideological, and more prone to prior involvement in criminal activities unrelated to Jihad, such as drugs, theft, and aggravated assault. They are much more likely to read jihadi literature in their daily lives than other forms of literature. They tend to look up to role models who stress violence in Jihad, like the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, than to those who justify and limit violence through moral reasoning, such as the late Abdullah Azzam. A majority come to religion later in life, especially in their early twenties. In the older cohort there was little traditional religious education; however, the newer cohort tends to be less ideologically sophisticated and especially moti-

vated by desire to avenge perceived injustices in Iraq. (When I asked detainees in Saudi Arabia who had volunteered for Iraq why they had, some mentioned stories of women raped, the killing of innocents and desecrations of the Koran, but all mentioned Abu Ghraib).

This “new wave” pattern of increasingly marginality and “born-again” religion is reflected in European and North African groups that express allegiance to al-Qaeda, as well as foreign fighters in Iraq (41 percent from Saudi Arabia and 39 percent from North Africa since August 2006, many of whom come in bunches from the same town, for example, the 50 or so volunteers from Darnah, Lybia, according to West Point’s *Sinjar Report on Foreign Fighters in Iraq*).

Krueger and others repeatedly refer to predictive factors in “recruitment.” It is important to understand that there is no, and has never been, clear evidence of “recruitment” into al-Qaeda. In its heyday, al-Qaeda operated more like a funding agency than a military organization. People would come to al-Qaeda with proposals for plots. Al-Qaeda would accept some 10-20 percent. Even the 9/11 suicide pilots were not “recruited” into Al-Qaeda. They were Middle Eastern Arabs who lived in a middle-class Germany community (the Hamburg suburb of Harburg) and were seeking friendship and identity in an Islamic community that was mostly Moroccan. Our interviews with friends in their circle and investigators reveal that the plotters met in the dorms and started hanging out together, including going to mosque services and meeting in local restaurants. Three wound up living in the same apartment, where they self-radicalized. They first thought of going to Chechnya to do jihad (but getting there proved too difficult) then to Kosovo (but the Albanian jihadis didn’t want them), and eventually wound up in an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan as a distant third choice.

There is no clear evidence that al-Qaeda ever had a recruiting or training infrastructure in Europe, although there is increasing evidence that al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda-related groups in Pakistan’s tribal areas maintain communication with Europeans after the train in Pakistan. This seems to be especially the case with those involved in recent plots in the United Kingdom. Generally, however, people go looking for al-Qaeda, not the other way around. Because there is very little of the old al-Qaeda left, many who go seeking al-Qaeda are caught. Those who seek out al-Qaeda do so in small groups of friends, and occasionally through kin. Almost all are schoolmates or workmates, and camp, soccer, or paintball buddies. Only a minority has gone beyond high school. Some have steady jobs and family, but many have only intermittent jobs and no families of their own. All have self-radicalized to some degree as friends before they go after al-Qaeda, although an encounter with someone who has been to an al-Qaeda training in camp in Afghanistan is occasionally an added stimulant. The overwhelming majority have not had sustained prior religious education but become “born again” into radical Islam in their late teens and early 20s. About 10 percent are Christian converts.

For example, in the wake of the Iraq invasion in April 2003, a disciple of the radical Islamist preacher Sheikh Omar Bakri organized a barbecue in a London suburb for about 100 people, most from the immigrant Pakistani community. Guests were asked for donations to help send a few volunteers to Pakistan to train for Jihad. Among those who used some of 3,500 euros collected to pay their way to Pakistan were Mohammed Sidique Kahn, one of the four suicide bombers in the July 2005 London Underground attack, and Omar Khyam, one of the conspirators convicted in the 2005 “Crevice” plot to plant fertilizer bombs around London. Their original intention was to do Jihad in Kashmir, but after a quick course in bomb-making they were told to “go home” and do something there. Each joined up with a few friends to concoct a plot. Interviews by journalist Jason Burke with investigators and friends familiar with the Crevice case suggest that 10 days of arduous hiking, camping, and training in Pakistan cemented commitment between buddies who learned to live together and care for one another. White-water rafting seems to have played a similar role in bonding the London Underground plotters. One of the four London suicide bombers was also a Jamaican Christian convert and pinball buddy.

Another telling example is the Madrid train bombing in March 2004. Five of the seven plotters who blew themselves when cornered by police grew up within a few blocks of one another in the tumble-down neighborhood of Jema Mezuak in Tetuan, Morocco: Jamal Ahmidan (“El Chino”), brothers Mohammed and Rachid Oulad Akcha, Abdennabi Kounjaa (“El Afghan”), and Rifaat Asrin (“El Niño). One, nicknamed the “Chinaman,” fled Morocco in 1993 from a murder charge, joining his elder brother in Madrid in taking and dealing drugs. In 1995, with his teenage Christian girlfriend and fellow junkie five months pregnant, the Chinaman decided to kick his heroin habit. His wife says he did it cold turkey with the help of the religion he was getting in a local mosque. The Chinaman turned around to preach reform to his drug-dealing associates, three brothers from the Mezuak, convincing two to quit their habit. The brothers became devoted to the Chinaman, and thereafter known in the barrio as his “bodyguards.”

The fourth of Madrid's Moroccan suicide bombers was described to us by some of his friends as Mezuak's first "Afghan" (a religious militant who grows a full beard and dresses with an Afghan hat, coarse knee-length tunic and sandals). He would preach jihad against "infidels" (*kuffar*) and Muslims who merit "excommunication" (*takfir*) because they refuse to follow "pure" Islamic ways. The father and friends of the fifth suicide bomber, a young gay man in his early 20s known as "The Kid," said that he had sold candies from a cart in Mezuak until 2000. He did not care much for religion until he was hooked up with The Afghan. By 2002, The Afghan and The Kid were in Madrid, the former as a part-time construction worker who dealt drugs with the Chinaman's "bodyguards," and the latter devoting himself to charity work helping out other young immigrants.

In the fall of 2003, just after the Chinaman returned from a prison stint in Morocco, he and his chums from the "old neighborhood" of Mezuak linked up with the economics-turned-religious student Serhane Fakhet and his buddies at a couple of apartment-mosques and soccer fields, and in daily dealings along Tribulete Street (at the *halal* butcher shop, the *Alhambra* restaurant, the barbershop, and the cell phone and Internet store) in the Lavapies neighborhood of central Madrid. The hands-on drug dealer and dreamy student bonded in an explosive combination. There was no al-Qaeda, or any other outside organization, involved.

From March to December 2007, I went to the Mezuak, and found that at least a dozen other young men had "gone Afghan" since the summer of 2006, according to local residents who knew them. Each would one day suddenly shave his beard, don western clothes and simply disappear; sometimes two vanished on the same day. Their friends and local Moroccan police say that they probably left for Iraq to become martyrs. The names and itineraries of 5 of them have been confirmed: Abdelmonim al-Amrani, Younes Achebak, Hamza Aklifa, and the brothers Bilal and Muncef Ben Aboud (DNA analysis has confirmed the suicide bombing death of Amrani in Baqubah, Iraq). All 5 attended a local elementary school (Abdelkrim Khattabi), the same one that Madrid's Moroccan bombers attended. And 4 of the 5 were in the same high school class (Kadi Ayadi, just outside Mezuak). The fifth, Bilal's brother Muncef, was a gifted mathematics student who went on to receive a scholarship to Morocco's prestigious air force academy, the *École Royale de l'Air*. But Muncef's mother said he was unsettled by what was happening around the world to Muslims and left his studies as he sought solace in religion.

All were soccer buddies who prayed at *Masjad al-Rohban* (the *Dawa Tabligh* mosque where Kounjaa had first gone "Afghan") and all hung out at the Chicago Café on Mamoun Street, Mezuak's main drag. The cousin of one of the Iraq-bound group (Hamza) was married to The Afghan, and all prayed in the same mosque where The Afghan first preached Jihad (the mosque's Imam was arrested in 2006 for collecting *zaqat* charity money from local business men to help send young men to Iraq). Friends say the young men bound for Iraq all respected the courage of the Madrid plotters but disagreed about their civilian targets and believed that action in Iraq would be more just and "soldierly" than in Europe. Like the Madrid plotters (as well as the Hamburg and London plotters), they were buddies, hung out together at local cafés and restaurants, and mingled in the same barbershops (where young men gather and talk).

The boundaries of the newer-wave networks are very loose, and the Internet now allows anyone who wishes to become a terrorist to become one anywhere, anytime. For example, the "*Al-Ansar*" chat room network was involved in plots by young men in half-a-dozen countries (U.S., U.K., Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Bosnia), and many of the men had never physically met. They would hack into Midwest media sites to post jihadi videos (e.g., of Zarqawi's beheading of Nick Berg) and recipes for making car bombs and suicide vests from scratch. From a basement apartment in Britain, a self-styled *Irhabi 007* ("Terrorist 007") helped in his spare time to coordinate plots with some high school chums in Toronto to blow up the Canadian parliament, and with others to attack the U.S. embassy in Bosnia (3 conspirators who did meet up physically in Bosnia were arrested with AK-47s, suicide belts, and thousands of rounds of ammunition).

A main problem in terrorism studies is that most "experts" have little field experience (for understandable but not insurmountable reasons) and otherwise lack the required level of details that statistical and trend analyses could properly mine. There are many millions of people who express sympathy with al-Qaeda or other forms of violent political expression that support terrorism. From a 2005-2006 survey of 10 countries involving 50,000 interviews, a Gallup study projected that 7 percent of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims (some 90 million people) felt that the attacks on Sept. 11 were "completely justified." There are, however, only a few thousands who show willingness to actually commit violence. They almost invariably go on to violence in small groups consisting mostly of friends and some kin (although friends tend to become kin as they marry one another's sisters and cousins; indeed, there are dozens of such marriages among members of Southeast Asia's Jemaah Islami-

yah).

Conclusions from the Field

The causes that humans are most willing to kill and die for are not just about particular ideas; they are about particular groups of people, in particular places, at particular times. Terrorist groups that kill and die for the Takfiri cause arise within specific “scenes”: neighborhoods, schools (classes, dorms), workplaces, common leisure activities (soccer, mosque, barbershop café) and, increasingly, online chat rooms. The process of self-selection into terrorism occurs within these scenes. Takfiri terrorism is stimulated by a massive, media-driven transnational political awakening in which Jihad is represented as the only the way to permanently resolve glaring problems of global injustice. This incites moral outrage against perceived attacks upon Islam. If moral outrage resonates with personal experience that reverberates among friends in a scene, and if aspects of the scene are already sufficiently action-oriented, such as group of soccer buddies or camp mates, then willingness to go out and do violence together is much more likely.

The publicity associated with spectacular acts of violence in the name of justice is the oxygen that currently fires terrorism. As Saudi Arabia’s General Khaled Alhumaidan crisply said to me recently in Riyadh, “The front is in our neighborhoods but the battle is the silver screen. If it doesn’t make it to the six o’clock news, then al-Qaeda is not interested.” These young people constantly see and discuss among themselves images of war and injustice against “our people,” become morally outraged (especially if injustice resonates personally, more a problem with immigrants in Europe than the USA), and dream a war for justice that gives their friendship cause. They mostly self-radicalize in cafés, barbershops, restaurants, and informal discussion groups (people mostly pray in mosques, not plot in them).

Most human violence is committed by young people seeking adventure, dreams of glory, and esteem in the eyes of their peers. Omar Nasiri’s *Inside Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda* (Perseus Books, 2006) rings true in its picture of the highs the militants get from the sense of brotherhood and sense of purpose. They want to belong to something that is at once intimate, bigger, and more permanent than a person alone. They kill and die for faith and friendship, which is the foundation of all social and political union, that is, all enduring human associations of non-kin: shared faith reigns in self-interest and makes social life possible; friendship allows genetically unrelated individuals to cooperate to compete. The most heroic cause in the world today is Jihad, where anyone from anywhere can hope to make a mark against the most powerful army in the history of the world. But they need their friends to give them courage, and it is as much or more for love of comrades than the cause that they will kill and die for in the end.

This new wave of Takfirism is about youth culture, not theology or ideology. It is mostly irrelevant to classic military and law enforcement programs that seek success by “imposing unsustainable costs” on enemies and criminals, as the U.S. Department of Defense *Quadrennial Defense Review* suggests. It is about sharing dreams, heroes, and hopes that are more enticing and empowering than any moral lessons or material offerings (although jobs that relieve the terrible boredom and inactivity of immigrant youth in Europe, and with under-employed throughout much of the Muslim world, can help offset the alluring stimulation of playing at war).

How you change youth culture is a difficult and fickle affair. Role models or small changes often have big effects on attitudes and fashions (gangster culture, skateboarding, post-Madonna belly-button exposure, Hush Puppies fad). Take the new comic book series of 99 Muslim superheroes, modeled on Marvel comics, which is rapidly catching the imagination of legions of Muslim youth in Southeast Asia and now the Middle East. The first issue of *The Ninety-Nine* (published in Arabic and English editions beginning in 2006) weaves together heroic slam-bang action in the “fight for peace” with clear messages “to provide services ranging from the distribution of food and medicine to impoverished parts of the world” and “to multicultural educational programs and housing initiatives.”

It is also important to provide alternate local networks and chat rooms that speak to the inherent idealism, sense of risk and adventure, and need for peer approval that young people everywhere tend toward. It even could be a 21st-century version of what the Boy Scouts and high school football teams did for immigrants and potentially troublesome youth as America urbanized a century ago. Ask any cop on the beat: these things work. It has to be done with the input and insight of local communities, however, or it will not work. De-radicalization, like radi-

calization itself, engages from the bottom up, not from the top down. This, of course, is not how you stop terrorism today, but how you help prevent it tomorrow.

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De-Radicalization of Jihad? The Impact of Egyptian Islamist Revisionists on Al-Qaeda

By Omar Ashour

In July 1997, the largest armed Islamist movement in Egypt surprised many officials, observers and even its own activists by declaring a unilateral ceasefire. This declaration by the Islamic Group (IG) started a comprehensive “de-radicalization” process that led to its practical abandonment of violence. [1] The process also included an ideological component that used Islamic theological arguments to de-legitimize the use of violence against the state, the society and the “other.” By 2007, the IG’s de-radicalization process appeared successful: no armed operations since 1999, no significant splits within the movement and around 25 volumes authored by the IG leaders supporting their new ideology with both theological and rational arguments. Two of the volumes were critiques of al-Qaeda’s behavior [2] and a third was a critique of the “clash of civilization” hypothesis, arguing instead for cultural dialogue. [3] The drafting of these volumes by the same movement that co-assassinated President Anwar al-Sadat for signing the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty was a significant development. This process of de-radicalization removed more than 15,000 IG militants from the Salafi-Jihadi camp led currently by al-Qaeda. [4]

In 2007, the al-Jihad Organization, which is the second largest armed Islamist organization in Egypt and has strong ties with al-Qaeda, followed the IG’s lead. The de-radicalization process was led by the former Emir (commander) of al-Jihad (1987-1993) and al-Qaeda’s ideologue, Dr. Sayyid Imam al-Sharif (alias ‘Abd al-Qadir Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz as well as Dr. Fadl). To recant his old views, al-Sharif authored a new book titled *Document for Guiding Jihad in Egypt and the World*. In addition, al-Sharif and other Jihad commanders had been touring Egyptian prisons to meet with their followers since February 2007. [5] The tours featured small initial meetings with the commanders of al-Jihad factions in an effort to organize a common stance. This was followed by lectures and questions periods between the al-Jihad leadership and the lower ranks. [6] This type of interaction was modeled after the IG leadership’s ten months of discussions and meetings with their followers in 2002. [7] Moreover, the IG leaders were included in al-Jihad’s meetings to share their experiences and demonstrate their relatively successful case of de-radicalization. Karam Zuhdi, the head of IG’s *Shura* (Consultative) Council, and Dr. Nagih Ibrahim, his deputy and the main ideologue of the IG, were present with al-Sharif in several internal al-Jihad meetings to encourage the process and answer questions. [8]

The phenomenon of “de-radicalization” is not only confined to Egyptian militants. It has also been undertaken by Algerian, Saudi, Yemeni, Jordanian, Tajik, Malaysian, and Indonesian armed Islamist movements, factions and individuals. It should be noted here that the “de-radicalization” process is primarily concerned with changing the attitudes of these movements toward violence – specifically violence against civilians (terrorism). It touches on other issues like stances on democracy and women, but there are no major changes regarding these issues. Almost all of these movements still uphold misogynist, homophobic, xenophobic, and anti-democratic views. However, the new development is abandoning and de-legitimizing the idea of using violence to impose such views. Given that, several important questions arise: What causes this de-radicalization process? What are the necessary conditions behind its success? Will it affect al-Qaeda’s behavior and/or ideology?

I have argued that a combination of charismatic leadership, state repression, interactions with the “other” and selective inducements from the state and other actors are common causes of de-radicalization. [9] There is a pattern of interaction between these factors leading to de-radicalization, and the case of al-Jihad is no exception. State repression and interaction with the “other” (here I refer to the dialogues between imprisoned liberals and human rights activists and al-Jihad’s and IG’s grassroots and leaders) [10] have affected the leadership of the radical organization. The latter initiates a de-radicalization process, which is bolstered by selective inducements from the state as well as internal interactions (lectures, discussions, meetings between the leadership, mid-ranking commanders and grassroots in an effort to convince them). De-radicalized groups often interact with other violent groups and, in some cases, they influence each other. The interactions between al-Jihad and the IG is one example of how a de-radicalized group can influence both the behavior and the ideology of a radical Salafi-Jihadi one. Given the strong ties of al-Jihad in general, and its main ideologue, al-Sharif, in particular to al-Qaeda, one question should be addressed here: what is the likelihood that the de-radicalization process of al-Jihad will affect al-Qaeda?

Although it is still too early to definitively answer this question, two facts should be highlighted. First, compared with other armed Islamist movements, including the IG and the Taliban, al-Jihad Organization has the strongest links with al-Qaeda. Al-Jihad figures were the co-founders and the main administrators behind the establishment of al-Qaeda. Those figures include Ayman al-Zawahri, Subhy Abu Sitta (alias Abu Hafis al-Masri), Ali Amin al-Rashidi (alias Abu 'Ubayyda al-Panjsheiri) and several others. Al-Sharif argued in one interview that these al-Jihad members are the "real" founders of al-Qaeda. In addition, a faction from al-Jihad merged with al-Qaeda in 1998 and signed the founding statement of the so-called "Global Islamist Front for Fighting Jews and Crusaders." Currently the commanders of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Iraq are Mustafa Abu al-Yazid (alias Sa'id) and Yusif al-Dardiri (alias Abu Ayub al-Masri and also Abu Hamza al-Muhajir) respectively. Both leaders were former mid-ranking commanders in al-Jihad. In addition, al-Qaeda's second-in-command, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahri, was the former leader of al-Jihad between 1993 and 2000 (following al-Sharif).

The second fact concerns al-Sharif himself, a highly regarded ideologue within the Salafi-Jihadi trend in general and al-Qaeda in particular. His two books, *The Collector in Pursuing The Noble Science* and *The Pillar of Preparation for al-Jihad in the Way of God* are considered "bibles" in jihadist circles and were taught in al-Qa'ida's camps in Afghanistan. Some Islamists regard al-Sharif to be the most influential ideologue in Jihadism after Sayyid Qutb.[12]

As opposed to the other ideologues of al-Qaeda, [11] al-Sharif's works are focused more on theological arguments. His *Document* dismantles the theological argument of Jihadism. For example, after long theological and ideological arguments, he concludes that the attacks on Sept. 11 were "treacherous acts" and that calling them a "*Ghazwa*" [13] is mocking and smearing the prophetic tradition of Muhammad. Indeed, al-Sharif challenges jihadists on their own ideological turf. Given that al-Qa'ida's leaders tend to legitimize their violent behavior to their followers and sympathizers based on Islamic theological grounds, the de-legitimization of that behavior by al-Sharif's *Document* and other de-radicalized Salafi-Jihadist works, such as the IG's, might affect some of al-Qa'ida's members, potential members and sympathizers. The question then becomes: which layers of al-Qaeda are most likely to be affected?

Arguably, al-Qaeda can be divided into three layers. The first layer is composed of a small core group that surrounds Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri and receives direct orders from them. This layer is the least likely to be affected. Al-Zawahiri has already criticized al-Sharif and mocked the idea of revisions, publications and "fax machines" in Egyptian prisons. In his latest audio statement, he promises to release a counterargument to al-Sharif's *Document* – a pledge that shows that al-Qaeda takes the new literature seriously enough to bother issuing a counterargument. In addition, Bin Laden criticized the behavior of al-Qa'ida in Iraq after the media announced that al-Sharif was in the process of writing the *Document*, but before the *Document's* release. Bin Laden may have attempted to minimize the effects of the *Document* and send a preemptive message to his sympathizers that there would be changes in al-Qaeda's violent behavior and terrorist tactics.

The second layer is al-Qa'ida's self-styled "branches" in Algeria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and even Egypt. Of these, the Egyptian branch is most likely to be affected because of the weight of al-Sharif in Egypt, as well as the revisions of the IG. In the words of one of the IG's "de-radicalized" historical leaders, al-Sharif's *Document* is the final say in the "Islamic jurisprudence of violence" in Egypt. [14]

The third layer is that of the 'Internet militants'. This group is mostly teenagers and young men inspired by al-Qaeda's rhetoric, but have no organizational ties or contacts with its network. In other words, this is a layer of 'self-recruited members'. Probably aware that this layer has the weakest ties with the core of al-Qaeda, al-Sharif dedicated a large part of his *Document* to warning young Muslim men about the 'Internet Sheikhs.' This layer is likely the one that will be affected the most, and its members could be discouraged from following Salafi-Jihadism in general and al-Qa'ida in particular because of the influence of al-Sharif's *Document*.

In conclusion, this article has briefly highlighted the general causes behind the de-radicalization of al-Jihad Organization. It also referred to the IG's successful de-radicalization process that took place on the behavioral, organizational and ideological levels. Behaviorally, the IG shunned the path of political violence. Ideologically, it de-legitimized it and its leadership was able to unite the organization behind upholding the transformations. Although its current stance is far from electoral or liberal democracy, it does not represent the end of the transformations. For example, several sympathizers and former IG and al-Jihad members have participated in the 2005 Egyptian parliamentary elections.[15] Also, Karam Zuhdi explained in an interview that the current IG

position regarding democracy could change, based on “the interests of the IG.”[16] This seems to indicate that pragmatism has a final say in the behavior of the IG.

In case of al-Jihad, the smaller and more radical group, the organization was able to follow the lead of the IG and de-radicalize on both behavioral and ideological dimensions. Unlike the IG, however, the organizational dimension of the de-radicalization process is incomplete. This is because there are factions within al-Jihad that still refuse to uphold de-radicalization. These factions also refuse to leave the Organization and one of them is in alliance with al-Qaeda. The process, however, did not stop at this point. [17]

Another factor can be highlighted in the case of al-Jihad. The lead of the IG and the interaction with its leaders has facilitated and influenced the de-radicalization process of al-Jihad, which stalled on several occasions. Moreover, several Islamist leaders have argued that without the IG’s de-radicalization process, there would not have been an al-Jihad one. This suggests a “domino effect” hypothesis that can be a subject of future research; de-radicalization of one group can influence others operating in the same context under similar conditions. This hypothesis is supported by the cases of the small violent Takfiri and Salafi-Jihadi groups which joined al-Jihad’s revisions in 2007, mainly in reaction to al-Sharif’s *Document*. [18]

The discussion and analyses provided here can be valuable for policy purposes. External social interaction aiming to influence Islamist leaders coupled with selective inducements could be key factors in de-radicalizing militant groups. Eliminating the “spiritual”[19] leaders of a militant movement could be perceived as a media/psychological victory for a government but would make a comprehensive de-radicalization process less likely to succeed. Those leaders are necessary to legitimize de-radicalization and initiate a genuine dialogue with their followers (internal social interaction). Finally, aside from the moral element, while durable, intense and reactive state repression was correlated positively with the de-radicalization in both cases of the IG and al-Jihad as well as others, the consequences of that type of repression were not limited to de-radicalization. Those consequences included the initial radicalization of the IG as well as the fragmentation and further radicalization of other militant groups. The most notable cases are those of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and Salafi Group for Preach and Combat (GSPC) (which is now al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb).

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[1] For more details on that process and its comparison to the processes of Radicalization and Moderation see Omar Ashour, “Lions Tamed? An Inquiry into the Causes of De-Radicalization of the Egyptian Islamic Group,” *Middle East Journal* vol. 61, no. 4 (Autumn 2007), 596 - 597.

[2] Karam Zuhdi et. al, *Istratijiyat wa Tafjirat al-Qa’ida: al-Akhta’ wa al-Akhtar* (The Strategy and the Bombings of al-Qa’ida: The Mistakes and The Dangers), (Cairo: al-Turath al-Islami), 2002.

[3] See Nagih Ibrahim et al., *Hidayyat al-Khala’iq bayna al-Ghayyat wa al-Wasa’il* (Guidance of People between Means and Ends), (Cairo: al-Abikan), 2005, 225 – 247.

[4] See Ashour, *Lions Tamed*, 597.

[5] al-Masry al-Youm, 18 April 2007, 1.

[6] Jahin, Interview, 5; al-Sharif, Interview, part two, 8.

[7] Ashour, *Lions Tamed?*, 618. The IG was given much more extensive governmental media coverage, however.

[8] Magdi Abdul Rasul, “al-Jihad wa al-Jama’a Yatafiqan ‘ala Awlawiyat al-‘amal al-Siyasi (The Jihad and the Group Agree on the Priorities of Political Action,” *al-‘Arabi al-Nassiri*, 16 March 2006, 1.

[9] Ashour, *Lions Tamed*, 603-605.

[10] An example of that interaction was between al-Jihad members and some secular liberals, most notably renowned human rights activist and former political prisoner Dr. Saad Eddine Ibrahim. In 2002 and 2003, during his detention, Dr. Ibrahim held several discussions about Islam, democracy and human rights with detained Islamists, including al-Jihad members. He mentioned that following several months of talks with these members, many of them were ready to abandon violence and condemned the 9/11 attacks (Saad Eddine Ibrahim. Interview by author, 1 November 2007. Toronto, Ontario, Canada).

[11] Such as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (Mustafa al-Sit Maryam), whose works are more strategy-oriented (not theology-oriented) and Ayman al-Zawahri, whose works are more history-oriented.

[12] Muntassir al-Zayyat. "Huwar ma' al-Zayyat (Interview with al-Zayyat)," Interviewed by Ahmad al-Khatib, *al-Masry al-Youm*, 17 November 2007, 5

[13] A *Ghazwa* is an Arabic word that is used to refer to the conquests of Muhammad in the Arabian Peninsula.

[14] Asim abd al-Majid, Interviewed by Ahmad Sa'ad. *Al-Jarida*, 4 December 2007, 12.

[15] Muntasir Al-Zayat, "Muhami Al-Usuliyin: Mawqifi Sa'b Fi Bulaq al-Dakrur (The Lawyer of the Fundamentalists: My Situation is Difficult in Bulaq al-Dakrur)," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 9 November 2005, 5.

-[16] Interview with Karam Zuhdi, Liqa' Khas. *Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel*, Cairo. 23 August 2006.

[17] By 2007, most of al-Jihad factions have joined the de-radicalization process. The main exceptions are the faction led by Ayman al-Zawahri, which joined al-Qa'ida, and three small factions in Egyptian prisons who mainly refuse the ideological component of the process (see for example Salih Jahin, "al-Muttahham el-12 fi Qadiyyat Ightiyya al-Sadat (The Defendant Number 12 in the Case of al-Sadat Assassination)," Interview by Ahmad al-Khatib, *al-Jarida*, 2 December 2007, 12).

[18] Abdu Zinah. "Qiyadat al-Jihad Dakhil al-Sujun al-Masriyya Ta'kuf 'ala I'dad Bayan Mubadarit Waqf al-'unf (The Commanders of al-Jihad inside Egyptian Prisons are Engaging in Preparing a Communiqué for an Initiative for ceasing Violence." *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 19 April 2007a, 1.

[19] As opposed to the organizational leaders of a group.

Creating Frankensteins: The Taliban Movement of Pakistan

By *Irm Haleem*

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* has been most popularly interpreted as a lesson in the unintended consequences of actions. It is not surprising therefore that Shelly's Frankenstein finds its way into the vocabulary of political scientists describing volatile situations in terms of 'creating Frankensteins one could not control'. In the novel, the monstrosity that comes to be known as 'Frankenstein' is the creation of Victor Frankenstein the doctor, a product of his promethean dreams of demonstrating his *control* over his natural environment and thus, his mastery in science and by extension his legitimacy as a scientist. The unintended consequences of Victor's experiment become of course an entity (Frankenstein the monster) that comes not only to challenge Victor's assumptions of control, but also comes to destroy all that Victor holds dear. At a critical juncture, not even appeasement suffices as the monster attains a gravitational force that ultimately destroys all.

But let us move away from the novel and into the political landscape of Pakistan. Subsequent governments in Pakistan—both civilian democratic, as well as military dictatorial—have had promethean dreams of their own. These have included a desire to be in control of the political and social environment of the country by taking an assortment of actions to broaden their constituencies in order to bolster their legitimacy. General Zia ul-Haq (1977-88), for example, instituted the 'Islamization' of Pakistan to bolster both his domestic and international legitimacy. Domestically he catered to the growing Sunni Islamic revivalist movement (to be distinguished from Islamist extremist movements) to the detriment of the Shia minority. At the same time, he presented himself to the international community as the vanguard against Soviet communist expansionism, much to the satisfaction of the Americans. The unintended consequences of this policy were the mushrooming of anti-Shia Sunni extremist groups and their counter anti-Sunni Shia extremist groups.

Within the context of these growing sectarian extremist entities, the late Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto pursued classic divide-and-rule policies during both her aborted tenures in the 1990s. During this period, she courted the most extremist elements within both the Sunni and Shia camps in order to broaden her constituency and thus bolster her legitimacy. On numerous occasions during her tenures, Karachi is said to have bordered on a state of civil war. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif did not alter the formula of these promethean dreams during his two aborted tenures in the 1990s. President (former General) Musharraf, while riding on a secular modernist platform, chose to turn a blind eye to the fomenting Islamist extremism, particularly in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Pakistan administered Kashmir, until the events of September 2001. Since 2001, Musharraf's government has now pursued a policy of war against the now quite consolidated Islamist extremist elements. The Frankenstein had not only been created by then, by was now on a course of its own.

The pragmatic logic of divide-and-rule policies and the policies of de facto appeasement (which is how 'turning a blind eye' as policy essentially became interpreted by the extremist elements) can perhaps be understood within the context of long held historical debate regarding the link between 'authenticity' and 'orthodoxy' in Pakistani civil society. This argument was most vociferously prevalent in the aftermath of the birth of the country in 1947 when the 'authentic' nature of Pakistan as a separate state for Muslims (the only state created to cater for a religious minority other than Israel in 1948) was being linked with the imperative of 'orthodoxy'. The creation of an Islamic state (a non-secular theocratic type state) was by this time being hailed by the very Islamists who had initially opposed to the idea of a separate state of Pakistan (as they considered Islam as transnational and thus not needing a demarcation as a separate state). Political legitimacy of subsequent governments and political parties thus became defined in terms of the extent to which they catered to this link, which even the most secular of all politicians could not ignore.

But if the link between authenticity and orthodoxy was troubling, the new link forged by the now emboldened Islamist extremist groups is even more disturbing - that of 'authenticity' with 'extremism'. As the incremental product of the years of myopic policies of the civilian and military governments' desire to consolidate their control, Islamist extremist groups seem to have culminated in the new *Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan*, literally translated as the Movement of the Taliban of Pakistan or the Taliban Movement of Pakistan. Although the entire configuration of this movement is unclear, it is becoming more evident that this movement is a patchwork

of other existing Islamist extremist groups – a Frankenstein that has been the product of selfish short-term policies of politicians and government officials intended to hold on to power and now becoming an entity challenging the government's notions of control and power.

The July 2007 'Lal Masjid' (or the Red Mosque) tragedy seems to have shed light on this emerging Taliban Movement of Pakistan. The crisis began July 3 when a group of Islamist extremists led by Maulana Abdul Aziz and his brother Maulana Abdul Rasihd Ghazi took all the occupants (students in residence) of the mosque hostage demanding a Taliban-style Islamic Shariah system in Islamabad. The crisis ended with Pakistani commandos storming the mosque on July 10, killing hundreds of men, women, and children. Details of the tragedy aside, what is noteworthy here is the links between the group in the mosque led by Maulana Aziz and Maulana Ghazi and the outlawed Islamist extremist groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (literally translated as the Army of Mohammed), Harkat ul-Mujahideen (literally translated as the Activity of the Mujahidden), Harkat-e-Jihad-Islami (literally translated as the Activity of Islamic Jihad) and the al-Qaeda and Afghan Taliban elements in Pakistan's NWFP.

Maulana Aziz and Maulana Ghazi's movement is thought to be linked with Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the Taliban militants in the Waziristan section of the NWFP. Even more notable perhaps is that Baitullah Mehsud is thought by some in the Pakistani intelligence community to have been the mastermind behind Benazir Bhutto murder in December 2007. Maulana Aziz and Maulana Ghazi's movement is also thought to be linked with Maulana Fazlullah—also known as 'Mullah Radio' for his broadcasts of his Taliban treaties on banned radio stations in Pakistan—who is the leader of Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi, literally translated as the Movement for the Implementation of the Law of Mohammad (or Islamic Law).

Musharraf's government banned the popular Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) in 2002, but has continued underground, developing a rigid Taliban rule in the Malakand region of the NWFP. Music and television is now banned in this region, and women are told that their marriages will be annulled if they do not get their husbands to grow beards. Decapitation of 'spies', security personnel, and now even women suspected of prostitution, has become common practice under the guise of Taliban rules. As trivial as these details may seem to some, these are indicative of the kind of totalitarian rule once consolidated by the Taliban government in Afghanistan (from the mid-1990s to 2001), the larger damaging consequences of which require no elaboration here given the ample scholarship devoted to that in the last many years.

The main targets of Maulana Aziz and Maulana Ghazi's movement, Baitullah Mehsud's Taliban movement, and the TNSM are the Pakistani security forces. In November 2006, a suicide bomber, possibly from the TNSM, killed 40 Pakistani army personnel near an army garrison in Dargai. Many other such suicide bomber incidents have followed and continue to be a threat to the Pakistani armed forces and government officials. Indeed, after the Lal Masjid tragedy in July 2007, the TNSM declared a jihad against the Pakistani government, a declaration which is thought to have been directly linked to the suicide bomber attack on Pakistani soldiers in July 2007 in Swat (a valley in NWFP) killing an army major and 3 other soldiers.

The Islamist extremist Frankenstein is no longer confined to the whims of political power games and divide-and-rule policies of the governments that pursues its own selfish Promethean dreams of control in order to create an environment within which it could exist and thrive. That this Frankenstein is very much alive is apparent, an unintended consequence of the governments' instant-mix projects of political legitimacy. But that this Frankenstein has become emboldened is also apparent from the very coalitions it is successfully forging, coalitions such as the Taliban Movement of Pakistan, whose very power is based on those vulnerabilities of the government that had led to its ill-calculated pursuits of legitimacy in the first place. Or, if you may, the gravitational force of the Islamist extremist groups and movements in Pakistan is based on the unveiling of the weaknesses of legitimacy of the government whose Promethean dreams have been exercised through facades of absolute sovereignty, inevitability creating Frankensteins it can not control. That the Taliban Movement of Pakistan is potentially threatening the very integrity of Pakistan is illustrated in the conclusions of a confidential Pakistani Interior Minister Report that states "we have to move swiftly and decisively, lest NWFP falls under the aegis of Talibanization." [1]

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NOTES:

[1] Hussain, Zahid, "The Battle for the Soul of Pakistan", in *Newsline* (Karachi, Pakistan), July 2007, p. 25.

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