

Doron Zimmermann and William Rosenau (eds.)

# THE RADICALIZATION OF DIASPORAS AND TERRORISM

Series Editors

Andreas Wenger and Victor Mauer  
Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich

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**Stewart Bell** is an award-winning Canadian journalist. He is the author of three non-fiction books, *Bayou of Pigs*, *The Martyr's Oath* and *Cold Terror*; a national bestseller. He has reported from Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Europe and the Balkans. Bell's writing about terrorism issues for the National Post newspaper, where he is a Senior Reporter, was awarded a Citation of Merit from the National Newspaper Awards. His work has also appeared in *Time*, *Reader's Digest*, *Maclean's*, *Books in Canada*, *Actualité*, *Saturday Night* and *Home-makers*. He holds a Master of Journalism from Carleton University and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of British Columbia. He lives in Toronto, Canada.

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in Europe” (see Islam and Muslims in Europe) for the European Commission.

**Kenneth Menkhaus** specializes in the Horn of Africa, with a particular interest in Somalia. He has researched, written, and conducted policy work on such topics as humanitarian relief, peacekeeping, post-conflict development assistance, collapsed states, protracted conflict, and Islamic movements in the Horn of Africa. In 1993-94 he served as special political advisor in the U.N. operation in Somalia, and was visiting professor at the US Army Peacekeeping Institute in 1994-95. In 2002 he was awarded a USIP research grant to complete a book on protracted conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Among his recent publications are *Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism* (Adelphi Paper, Oxford University Press, 2004).



# Introduction

*Doron Zimmermann and William Rosenau*

Throughout history, diasporic communities have been susceptible to a variety of forms of radicalization. Indeed, even in the pre-Christian era, ethnic and religious diasporas were prone to religious and separatist radicalization.<sup>1</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, ethnonationalism has continued to fuel radicalization within some diasporic communities. With respect to contemporary global terrorism, militant Islamism, and in particular, its Salafist-Jihadist variant, serves as the most important ideational source of radicalization within diasporas in Western Europe and North America. Within the global North, this radicalization has frequently pitted the political desirability of relatively liberal immigration politics against the core requirements of internal security.

Whereas diasporas in North America have been more successful at integrating into the traditional immigrant societies of Canada and the United States, in Western Europe and the United Kingdom the prevailing trend for second and third generation immigrants is the establishment of parallel societies under the pressure of contradictory forces,<sup>2</sup> namely, demands for assimilation versus the practice of marginalization by host societies.<sup>3</sup> Europeans have been late to recognize the consequences of the endurance and growth of ghettoized immigrant communities over the past five decades, and have been belated (and generally ineffective) in devising effective policies for promoting integration.<sup>4</sup> The failure of integration has an obvious but pernicious consequence – unabated marginalization leaves diasporic communities vulnerable to exploitation by radicals.<sup>5</sup> The resulting problems are that the credibility of the host country government's integration efforts are steadily suffering in the eyes of those it is intended to support. This adverse trend tends to further ensconce and legitimize the prophets of instant gratification, who act as the forerunners to advocates of violent change. They are usually the

same individuals, involved in the sequential stages of the radicalization process: alienation, susceptibility to indoctrination, re-education and deployment.

Post-9/11, the United States, and to a lesser degree Canada, have gone to great lengths in expanding counter-terrorism which has included, at least to some degree, counter-radicalization. It appears that the two countries' historic experience as immigrant nations is standing them in good stead, when it comes to the devising of interconnected integration and security measures (e.g. the 'citizen academy' in Canada).<sup>6</sup> The active wooing of immigrant communities and the proactive provision of inducements for societal and economic participation in the aftermath of 9/11 also appear to bear fruit. Government officials, subsequent to 9/11, had unequivocally affirmed Muslim communities' integral role in society.<sup>7</sup> Also, integration appears to have had more credible force in North America in many cases in that for Muslims the prevailing culture of self-advancement through education has resulted in higher living standards and facilitated access to the social mainstream.<sup>8</sup>

In Europe, national-level efforts to bolster internal security have in many cases been sluggish, ambivalent and sometimes contradictory. At the level of the European Union, progress in developing effective policies has been both slow and reactive.<sup>9</sup> And, in an act of compensation for these policy shortcomings, Brussels has enacted event-driven, inter-governmental action, which is being criticized for its lack of democratic accountability.<sup>10</sup> The discrepancy between these two tracks presumably stems from an unrealistic and, arguably disingenuous, assumption about Europeans' divided will and limited ability to integrate diasporic communities – a project which flies in the face of a longstanding historic experience of ethnic and cultural-linguistic nationalism and exclusivism germane to Europe. If one acknowledges the post-Westphalian reality of ethnically, culturally or linguistically homogeneous nation states in Europe, the rule of thumb for Europe has largely been that while immigrants could become passport-carrying citizens of their host *states*, as a group they could never become citizens of their *host* nations. The caveat of immigrant elites may apply, but is inherently unrepresentative.

At present, this contradiction between European political equivocation, e.g. the demands for assimilation vs. the practice of marginalization by host societies – underlined by the advent of far-right populist parties with xenophobic agendas on the continent and in the UK, and counterbalanced by liberal notions of multiculturalism<sup>11</sup>, as well as event-driven, stop-gap counter-radicalization measures<sup>12</sup> –, and an indisputable situational necessity, remains unresolved. Tension between legitimacy and efficiency is also widely felt in the field of countering radicalism in burgeoning parallel societies; and with implementing counter-terrorism policies intended to bolster security without undermining civil rights.<sup>13</sup> A strange manifestation of this contradiction between immigration policy and counter-terrorism is that two major terrorist attacks on European capitals originating from Europe’s Muslim diaspora communities have had little verifiable effect on the cohesion or commitment of European integration and internal security policies.

The four contributors to this volume address some of the key issues pertaining to radicalization of Muslim diaspora communities. A number of other important questions are outside the scope of this volume. For example, what has been the impact of Western foreign policy on radicalization? Specifically, how, and to what degree, have the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the wider ‘global war on terrorism’ contributed to terrorist recruitment?<sup>14</sup> Put another way, was the strategy of ‘forward defense’ against terrorism worth the risk of alienating and radicalizing expatriate Muslims living in the West?<sup>15</sup> Another important question involves the elusive concept of ‘moderate’ Islam, which begs for a rigorous reappraisal. The notion that violent Jihadists can be countered most effectively by conservative, even ‘orthodox,’ Sunni Muslim forces has gained currency in some policy circles. This is particularly true in the UK, where Salafists have been engaged to help wage the ‘war of ideas’ on national and community levels.<sup>16</sup> The pseudo-jurisprudence and scriptural re-interpretation on which al Qaeda’s ideology is premised was said by the proponents of this approach to be ideally confronted by the credibility bestowed upon traditional scholars of Islam. Conversely, traditional Salafist ambivalence on such crucial subjects as Jihadists’ condoning of suicide terrorism has called this avenue of counter-radicalization

into question and in some corners has thoroughly discredited the idea of juxtaposing extremist literalism with traditional exegesis as a means of undermining the radicals.<sup>17</sup>

Concurrently, South Asian and African Sufis throughout Europe are also resisting the primarily Saudi-financed Salafist and Wahhabi incursions into Western diasporic communities with increasing self-confidence. Sufis in North America, Europe and Africa have countered the ostracism they have suffered at the hands of Salafist-Jihadist preachers by branding them ‘blow-ins,’ ‘foreign agents’ and, in the case of devout women frequently excluded by Salafists from participating in the Saudi-financed mosques, by harnessing the counter-terrorism discourse of their host countries in their own cause.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, however, while indicating a degree of identification of Muslim diasporic communities with their Western host countries, the inchoate challenge to the Jihadist Salafist bid for power in the Muslim Ummah could be undermined by perceived or actual Western support. The forces competing within the Muslim diaspora in the West tread a fine line between religious credibility, and not being portrayed as stooges of Western interest in aiding and abetting the maintenance of political and socio-economic status quo of Europe’s embattled Muslim immigrant ghettos and parallel societies.

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Against the backdrop of heated debates in European political circles subsequent to the 7/7 London attacks regarding counter-terrorism measures aimed at curbing Jihadists in the Muslim communities themselves, of expulsions of extremist preachers, of the riots in the French *banlieues* in 2006, and possible homegrown terrorist plots in North America, experts from across Europe the United States and Canada met for a joint ETH-RAND conference in March 2006. The participants explored views, developments and the contemporary characteristics of Muslim diasporic communities in the West; the radicalization trends within Muslim diasporas; linkages with ‘home-grown’ terrorism; and the larger context of immigration policy and faltering integration endeavors in a majority of Western countries. These themes are explored in the four contributions that make up this edited volume.

No attempt has been made to establish a comparative basis for the individual cases, or a broadly representative basis across the West, other than reviewing the individual experiences, and considering possible commonalities. Considerable doubt remains as to the exact definition of the term 'diaspora.'<sup>19</sup> In the context of the present volume, the editors and their contributors have applied a pragmatic usage of the term, which is here to broadly apply to a relatively homogenous cultural, religious or linguistic expatriate or immigrant community. The idiosyncratic character of the diasporic experience actually cautions us against stressing commonalities, or against seeking to identify ostensibly deductible traits and characteristics with a view, as so often in the social sciences, to arrive at generalizations. This perception also is a tribute to the inter-disciplinary composition of the conference. With a view to generating practical utility to this volume, each contributor discusses possible recommendations in addressing the radicalization conundrum.

Michael Whine's chapter focuses on the national level, but equally engages in a discussion positing various groups inside the indigenous radical spectrum, an estimation of the threat emanating from the various actors, while also reviewing some of the governmental countermeasures. On the other side of the Atlantic, Jocelyne Cesari provides important data on the historic growth and composition of Muslim communities across the United States. The blending of Islam with American mainstream civil society, its success and potential problems, as well as difficulties, and, in contrast with the European experience, relative lack thereof, form the center piece of Cesari's exposition. Just across the border, Canada's role as a popular destination for immigrants worldwide also has a shadowy side, aptly portrayed by Stewart Bell. His chapter encompasses not only the Muslim community in Canada, but also takes into account other diasporic segments of Canadian society. His analysis, juxtaposing the permissiveness of the then prevailing Canadian immigration policy and the reality of a clear and present reservoir of discontented and easily radicalized fringe elements, is, indeed, sobering. The mid-2006 case involving the 'Toronto Eighteen' plotting attacks on landmarks in that city, further highlights the pertinence and timeliness of Bell's presentation. North African diasporic communities in Europe have been linked

with terrorist activity in France during the mid-1990s and more recently, were directly involved in the tragic events of 11 March 2004 in Madrid.

The involvement of North African diasporic communities in terrorism has received extensive analytical attention. Much less well understood is the role of diasporic communities with origins in *sub-Saharan* Africa. Sub-Saharan African Muslim communities in Europe and the United States, though frequently starting off as impecunious emigrants, appear to experience far fewer obstacles to upward social mobility and integration per se, in spite of being subject to racism. Ken Menkhaus aptly portrays and analyzes sub-Saharan expatriate communities and formulates the pertinent queries regarding their as yet under-researched disposition, as well as their susceptibility to, or rather their surprising ‘inoculation’ against, the influence of radical Islam, while also deducing follow-on questions with potential value for meeting the challenge of the radicalization of diasporas in the West. One of these queries relates to a potential new trend, which has seen American citizens of Somali descent becoming involved in the hostilities taking place in their ancestral lands; and associated with a group in contact with Al Qaeda.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the overarching theme with respect to East African Muslims and their kin living in the Western diaspora communities appears to be that their concerns are local, unlike Al Qaeda’s agenda, which is indubitably global.

Overall, the various contributions, though they do not cover the full spectrum of all Muslim diasporic communities in the West, leave alone non-Muslim diasporic communities across these regions, give an impression of a significant cross-section of today’s conflicted immigrant communities faced with the specter of radicalization and contending with battling terrorism from among their own ranks.

As is appropriate at the end of an introduction, the editors would like to thank Bruce Hoffman, formerly director of the RAND Corporation’s Washington Office and currently Professor at the Edmund A Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, and Andreas Wenger, the director of the Center for Security Studies and Professor at ETH Zurich, as well as all of their contributors for the support and their persistence in realizing this timely and relevant project.

## Notes

- 1 The term 'diaspora' (Greek, διασπορά – "a scattering or sowing of seeds") was first applied to the Jewish people in exile. Werner Keller, *Und sie wurden zerstreut unter alle Völker* (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1966).
- 2 *Currents and Crosscurrents of Radical Islamism. A Report of the Center for Strategic and International Studies Transatlantic Dialog on Terrorism* (Washington D.C.: April 2006), p. 7.
- 3 Unpublished paper by Sarah Spencer, "The Challenge of Integration in Europe," Centre on Migration Policy and Society, Oxford University, 25 April 2005, p. 7.
- 4 "Look out, Europe, they say: Why so many Muslims find it easier to be American than to feel European," Special Report, *The Economist*, 24 June 2006, pp.29-34; Katrin Bennhold, "For U.S. Muslims, it's the American way," *International Herald Tribune*, 8 November 2006, p. 2.
- 5 This applies to the four countries – the UK, France, Germany and Spain – whose governmental integration policies are encountering considerable difficulties. Paul Gallis, Kristin Archick, Francis Miko, Steven Woehrel, *Muslims in Europe: Integration Policies in Selected Countries*, Congressional Research Service, 18 November 2005.
- 6 Canadian briefing at the Wilton Park conference on "Countering Terrorism in Europe and North America: How Can a Community Approach Be Developed?," 26-28 February 2007.
- 7 In the United Kingdom by contrast, the very notion that Islam is not at the heart of the problem has been assiduously challenged. Rod Liddle, "Islam, not extremism, is the problem," *The Spectator*, 4 May 2005 at [www.spectator.co.uk/article\\_pfv.php?id=7573](http://www.spectator.co.uk/article_pfv.php?id=7573) accessed on 4 May 2005.
- 8 *Currents and Crosscurrents of Radical Islamisms*, op. cit., p. 7.
- 9 Doron Zimmermann, "The European Union and Post-9/11 Counterterrorism: A Reappraisal," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 29, 2006, pp. 123-145.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 11 Walter Laqueur, "After France," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, 8 December 2005.
- 12 "The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism," Council of the European Union, Brussels, 24 November 2005.
- 13 Doron Zimmermann and Andreas Wenger, "Toward Efficiency and Legitimacy" in Doron Zimmermann and Andreas Wenger (eds.), *How States Fight Terrorism. Policy Dynamics in the West* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), pp. 203-229.
- 14 Guido Steinberg, "Terror – Europas internes Problem," *Internationale Politik*, November 2005, pp. 14-21.
- 15 Petter Nesser, "Jihadism in Western Europe After the Invasion of Iraq: Tracing Motivational Influences from the Iraq War on Jihadist Terrorism in Western Europe," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 29, 2006, pp. 323-342; Peter R. Neumann, "Europe's Jihadist Dilemma," *Survival*, vol. 48, no. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 71-84.
- 16 This topic was reviewed in-depth at the Wilton Park conference on "Countering Terrorism in Europe and North America: How Can a Community Approach Be Developed?," 26-28 February 2007.
- 17 Martin Bright, "When Progressives Treat with Reactionnaires. The British State's flirtation with radical Islamism," *Policy Exchange*, July 2006.
- 18 Comments made by the presenter in the context of a briefing on this subject at the Wilton Park conference on "Countering Terrorism in Europe and North America: How Can a Community Approach Be Developed?," 26-28 February 2007.
- 19 Cf. note 1, *supra*.
- 20 For more on this point, see Andrea Elliot, '2 Somali-Americans Charged With Aiding Terror', *New York Times*, 13 July 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/14/us/14somalis.html>, accessed 20 August 2009.



# The Radicalization of Diasporas and Terrorism: United Kingdom

*Michael Whine*

## Introduction

Following the 7 July attacks in London, and planned attacks in Los Angeles, Australia and elsewhere, new trends emerged in the modus operandi of the Global Jihad Movement (GJM), which currently presents the most potent terrorist threat and the one most likely to recruit its actors from diaspora communities. These include, but are by no means limited to: the recruitment, or self recruitment of nationals, who train and operate within their country of origin only; the recruitment of converts to Islam, who are deemed to be less conspicuous operating on home territory; the recruitment of women terrorists, who will be viewed with less suspicion; training and developing explosives and technical know-how online, rather than attending training facilities in another country; the development of low cost terrorism and the self-financing of terrorist acts.<sup>1</sup>

The Islamist ideologies that promote extremism and which act as a conveyor belt or springboard that enable some activists to become terrorists are becoming more influential. They include those of the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamat e Islami and others. In recent years the presence of Salafi activists in Europe promoting *jihad* has also become more apparent. All these trends have emerged within the United Kingdom and are impacting upon and influencing British-born Muslims of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and African descent.

This chapter describes the background of the Muslim communities and examines the issues which have led to the radicalisation of many people within them. It goes on to show how British counter-terrorism legislation has had to adapt to the changing nature of terrorism and what other initiatives the government has undertaken to confront and

undermine the attractions of extremism and terrorism for an astonishing number of young people within the Muslim community. It concludes with a commentary on the failure to appreciate the growing hold that Islamists have on the Muslim community and the government's initial efforts to incorporate Islamism rather than confront it openly.

## **Britain's Muslim Communities**

Britain provides a home for as diverse a range of Muslims as Islam itself. The first large scale migration was from Pakistan, during the 1960s. The second was the consequence of the secession of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) from Pakistan in 1971, and the expulsion of Asian communities from East Africa in 1972 provided a third.<sup>2</sup> Other Muslim migrants came from Cyprus in the 1950s and 1960s, from Uganda and Kenya in the 1970s, and from Somalia and the Horn of Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. Political tensions in the 1990s led to yet another wave from North Africa.<sup>3</sup>

The 2001 Census, which contained a voluntary question on religion, showed there to be 1.6 million people in England and Wales who identified themselves as Muslim. The voluntary nature of the question is likely to have led to a low figure and it is thought that there are currently around 2 million Muslims within the UK as a whole. Over two thirds are from the Indian sub continent, and importantly only from a limited number of areas. Indian Muslims are primarily from Gujarat; Pakistanis from the Mirpur district of southern Kashmir and the Camballpur district of north east Punjab; Bangladeshis from Sylhet and Chittagong.<sup>4</sup> The 2001 Census also showed that almost 55% of Pakistanis and over 46% of Bangladeshis were born in the UK and that the Muslim population is among the youngest in the country, with one third aged 50 and under, and a further 20% aged between 16 and 24.<sup>5</sup>

Settlement has been geographically uneven: almost half live in the London area and the West Midlands. Yorkshire and the Greater Manchester area account for almost two thirds of the rest. Within the West Midlands, three quarters live in the Greater Birmingham area. Turkish Cypriot Muslims live almost exclusively in north east and east London,

where more than half the Bangladeshis are also concentrated. The small Arab community lives almost exclusively in the London area, although there are small numbers in Manchester and Leeds.<sup>6</sup>

Virtually all mosques and Muslim organisations are registered charities, allowing them to claim tax exemption and reduced local property taxation, and Charity Commission statistics provide a measure of their growth. In 1963, thirteen mosques were registered in Britain; from 1966 they began to register at an annual rate of nearly seven. The published list for 1999 gives a total of five hundred and eighty four mosques in England and Wales. Muslim Council of Britain research suggests that there now are around nine hundred mosques, but the real figure is thought to be higher than 1500.<sup>7</sup>

## **Islamist penetration and the Global Jihad Movement in the UK**

Umbrella groupings of mosques were established from the 1960s onwards to represent the varied religious traditions, but it is political and foreign events, rather than domestic issues, that have provided the driving force for activism and recruitment by Islamist groups. Five in particular played a role in awakening and activating Muslim political engagement: Kashmir, with which many of Pakistani origin have family ties; the publication of the Satanic Verses; the Iraq war, seen by many as an anti-imperialist act by Saddam Hussein to break down the artificial borders imposed by the West and the strong reaction to the Saudi invitation to invite western forces onto sacred Muslim territory; the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia. Latterly it has been Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Palestine, that have acted as rallying points.<sup>8</sup>

The publication of the Satanic Verses in 1988 was seized on by Islamist activists after public demonstrations organised by religious leaders made little impression on the government. The UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA) was created by Jamaat-e-Islami followers to channel Muslim rage and frustration and in due course some of its founders established the Muslim Council of Britain, which claims to

be the representative body of the Muslim community, and which has been the vehicle through which government hitherto sought to address the Muslim community and its concerns. At the same time the Muslim Parliament, a pro-Iranian group led by Sunni activists, obtained a *fatwah* against Rushdie from Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. In this manner, Sunni Islamist groups took the initiative and leadership of Muslim community affairs in Britain eclipsing the traditional and quietist leadership and at the same time reducing Saudi influence, which previously had been dominant through its funding activity.<sup>9</sup>

The failure of Britain, Europe and the USA to come to the aid of Bosnia's Muslims from 1992 onwards was also seized on by Islamist groups, who successfully preached that the West was complicit in their genocide. It was prepared to allow the destruction of European Muslims by Christians and only other Muslims were prepared to come to their aid. The government was petitioned to intervene militarily but failed to do so until it was too late, and *Salafi* groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Afghan veterans now resident in Britain used this misperception to recruit, fundraise and organise aid convoys, all of which had a salutary effect on the minds of many young Muslims.

The Islamists emphasised transnational infrastructures and solidarity while at the same time promoting Muslim insecurity in a society, where racism had been shown to be institutionalised by the Macpherson Inquiry into the killing in 1993 of Steven Lawrence, a black teenager, and the failure of the police to bring his murderers to justice. Their message of allegiance to a worldwide *Ummah* was therefore more attractive than allegiance to a society, which failed to protect Muslim interests.<sup>10</sup> According to McRoy: "The perception (grew) that Muslims worldwide were under attack from the West – that western people hated them and their religion, were determined to keep them weak and powerless, and even to humiliate them. Ultimately this perception was to lead to the terrible events of 7/7".<sup>11</sup>

Concurrently, Britain was gathering a reputation as a refuge for foreign Islamist and *Salafi* groups, most noticeably from North Africa and the Middle East, who used the freedoms accorded them by Britain to organise funding, political activity and even to effect command and

control of terrorist activity in their countries of origin. Recruitment for jihad training in Bosnia, Kashmir, Pakistan and later Iraq was permitted although increasingly those involved in it came under the surveillance of the police and Security Service. The authorities' attitude that this was acceptable, as long as it did not impact on Britain directly, enraged some states, particularly Yemen, Egypt and Jordan and led to the sarcastic French epithet of 'Londonistan'. The refusal of the government to return some exiles, whose extradition was requested, because they had been tried in absentia or by military courts, which the UK does not recognise, or because they might be tortured on their return, did nothing to lessen the friction. The British legal system allows the right of appeal in extradition cases and lengthy delays in acceding to foreign requests ensured that some cases took many years to reach a conclusion.

Afghan war veterans, who for obvious reasons were no longer able to return to their home countries, as well as Arab political refugees such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood representative Kamal al Helbawi, Rashid al Ghannouchi, the leader of the Tunisian Muslim Brotherhood-aligned an Nahda party, Muhammad Mukhtar Mustafa al Mukri, the Egyptian former leader of the al Jammah al Islamiyah, and the Syrian Salafi ideologue Mustafa Abd al Mu'nim Abu Halimah (a.k.a. Abu Basir al Tartusi), all found a home in Britain and began to influence the Muslim community. By 2001 their influence, and that of others, had penetrated many South Asian community structures.<sup>12</sup> Parallel to and in conjunction with this, GJM activity was gathering pace. Among the first visible signs were the takeovers of the hitherto moderate Brighton mosque by Afghan veterans led by Abu Omar Othman (a.k.a. Abu Qatada) and the Libyan Deghayes brothers, followed by the North London Mosque at Finsbury Park by Abu Hamza al Masri. The former became a base for organising aid convoys to Bosnia and the latter a recruitment center at which several GJM terrorists were recruited. One prominent *Salafi* activist living in Birmingham, Abu Khadeeja, described the galvanising effect that Bosnia played in the GJM's recruitment processes:

It was a religious genocide that took place in Bosnia and there's no doubt about that and history speaks for itself. However, political

Muslims in the United Kingdom, they turned it into another highly politicised event, so what they started doing was [that they] started spreading videos of atrocities in Bosnia, under the counter videos that you wouldn't find in mainstream stores. So they started spreading this amongst ignorant Muslims and that just radicalizes them. All they're seeing is Muslims being killed. What are we going to do about it? Let's get the next flight to Bosnia and do some killing of our own...<sup>13</sup>

After 9/11, Islamist activity made further inroads. Not all the activists have been *Salafi* or believe in violence: the range of views is quite wide but this process enabled the GJM to establish itself more deeply and to cross Muslim community lines. A long list of GJM activists active in Britain now began to emerge. Abu Qatada, named by the Spanish authorities as bin Laden's European 'ambassador', was found by a Treasury investigation to have over one hundred and eighty thousand pounds sterling in a bank account, which he allegedly used to fund al Qaeda activity; Khaled al Fawwaz, Adel Abdel Bary and Ibrahim Eidaous were alleged to have been involved in the 1998 attacks in Kenya and Tanzania and in 2001 lost their appeals against extradition to the USA to answer terrorism charges.<sup>14</sup> In January 2002 Hassan Butt, a member of al Muhajiroun, gave a radio interview in Pakistan in which he stated that British Muslims returning from Afghanistan would now take military action against targets in Britain.<sup>15</sup>

But it was the apprehension of the North African groups in connection with several foiled plots to use biological and other weapons in Britain that led the authorities to issue public warnings of the terrorism threat within the country. Between 11 September 2001 and 31 March 2007, police arrested 1228 people in connection with terrorism offences, of whom only 436 were charged with terrorism and related offences. 224 were convicted of terrorism related offences, 668 were released without charge and over a hundred were awaiting trial. The time taken to bring terrorism cases to court can be as long as three years and although the full extent of the threat has yet to become truly apparent to the general public, the events of July 2005 had a seismic effect on the public consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

## Diaspora Communities

Britain's Muslim communities have not only led lives segregated, in the main, from the host community, they are also segregated from each other. This is reflected in patterns of settlement: Bangladeshis in London's inner East End; Pakistanis and Kashmiris in the Midlands and industrial towns of the North West, etc. This of course is a normal migratory pattern, with successive waves of migrants settling near their countrymen for material and cultural support. The disturbances in northern towns in the spring and summer of 2001 highlighted these continuing segregation patterns into the second and third generations, and the growing lack of community cohesion.

The government inquiry established to look into the riots reported that British society was fragmenting as a consequence of immigration and that immigrants (who were primarily Muslim) lived totally separate lives from their white hosts, even within the same neighbourhoods. There had been a national failure, it reported, "to develop clear values, which focus on what it means to be a citizen of a modern multi-racial Britain" ... and that "the programmes devised to tackle the needs of many disadvantaged and disaffected groups, whilst being well intentioned and sometimes inspirational, often seemed to institutionalise the problems. The plethora of initiatives, with their baffling array of outcomes, boundaries, time scales, and other conditions seemed to ensure divisiveness and a perception of unfairness in virtually every section of the communities we visited."<sup>17</sup>

Five years later, the chairman of that far-sighted review, Ted Cantele, would find that the problem persisted, despite energetic efforts by the government to address the lack of community cohesion. He noted in 2006 that: "We all need to feel that we "belong" to Britain, and that it is not easy when our sense of belonging is so strongly governed by our own group or area."<sup>18</sup>

Continuing analysis of attitudes within the Muslim communities underscores this lack of cohesion, but at the same time indicate a realization that many Muslims can, and want, to make a contribution to British society. They also show that Muslims want the government to do more

to combat extremism. But at the same time, the same studies also show that extremist ideologies are radicalizing and unifying many within these communities.

A poll by ICM Research published in July 2005 indicated that the majority of the 500 Muslims questioned supported the government's plans to exclude religious fanatics, and felt that their own communities bore much responsibility for stamping out religious fanaticism. Nearly half (41%) thought that Muslims needed to integrate further into British society, although slightly more (47%) were happy with the current situation and only 6% wanted greater separation.<sup>19</sup>

In December 2005, a Populus poll showed that barely more than half of respondents showed any awareness of the Muslim community groups, which claim to represent their interests, including those, such as the Muslim Council of Britain, whom the government saw as its main interlocutors. It further found that these umbrella groups barely represented the majority of Muslims' views and that Muslim religious leaders promoted by the British government commanded little or no support at all. However, it also found that 46% of the Muslims polled believe in a Jewish/Masonic conspiracy to rule the world, which is clear evidence of Islamist penetration and the overspill of Middle East influences.<sup>20</sup>

A second Populus poll published in June 2006 again showed that a majority (56%) of those polled thought that what the government was doing was insufficient to combat extremism in their communities. Respondents were almost equally divided on whether they thought it is acceptable for the authorities to monitor what is being preached in mosques, (49% for: 48% against), and on whether the security services had the right to infiltrate Muslim organisations to gather information (48% for: 47% against).<sup>21</sup> However, 79% of respondents stated that they had experienced increased hostility since the July bombings, and 81% thought it unacceptable for the police to view Muslims with greater suspicion on the grounds that the 7/7 bombers were Muslims, and only 34% believed that Britain's anti-terror laws are applied fairly to their community. Both the December and the June polls showed a constant 7% of those polled believe that suicide attacks on civilians in the UK can be justified. The December poll also found that support for terrorism rises

among the young (12 % among 18-24 year olds) and the June poll found that 16 % support terrorism against military targets. The June poll also found that 13 % of respondents regarded the July 7 bombers as “martyrs”.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly then, many Muslims continue to lead separate lives from the mainstream, despite a reasonably tolerant attitude by governments and populace, since their migration. It has generally been external issues, which have politicised them, but when local social issues have overwhelmed them (such as high unemployment rates in the industrial north west following the virtual shutdown of the cotton industry), the consequence has been community tension and riots. Young people, who are influenced by Islamist ideas, either taught locally or absorbed from abroad, are prepared to express their estrangement from the host society and the West in general, and are more likely to be influenced by extremist ideas, and to support terrorism.

## **Counter-Terrorism Measures by the State and Society**

In 2003, the government began to formulate new holistic counter-terrorism strategies but it was the July bombings that led to their introduction into the public arena when they were outlined in the Prime Minister’s 5 August press conference.<sup>23</sup> They were succinctly set out in the Home Office written evidence to the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee, and were based on six core elements: strengthening legislation; improving judicial processes in cases involving terrorism; preventing extremists from fomenting terrorism in the UK by excluding or deporting them; working with other governments to deliver a new counter-terrorism agenda; working with faith communities, and especially the Muslim community; protecting the UK’s borders.<sup>24</sup>

This multi-pronged offensive can also be analyzed as a series of initiatives under five headings: legislation; law enforcement; financial counter-measures; electronic counter-measures; counter-measures within society. Counter-terrorism legislation had to be adapted from temporary and annually renewable laws, originally enacted to deal with Irish terror, to permanent legislation, and the changes wrought would have to be

incremental and evolutionary. The changes since 2000 have been the result of the very different challenges posed by Islamist terrorism. Irish terrorism was essentially domestic: groups were hierarchical and tightly structured; terrorists were determined to avoid capture; terrorist acts were preceded by warnings and mostly aimed at restricted casualties; terrorists used bombs and bullets; there was a strategic end-goal and a negotiable political agenda.

Islamist terrorism however is global; it employs large fluid networks; it increasingly involves suicide attacks with no warning; it aims to inflict mass casualties; there is no negotiation over its goals. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 (PTA) supplied the main counter-terrorism legislation for 24 years but was specifically enacted to deal with Irish terror and was temporary, requiring an annual judicial review.<sup>25</sup> The prospect of a ceasefire in Northern Ireland, an increase in international terrorism, which would necessarily adopt a different modus operandi, and the necessity of bringing the law into line with Britain's international obligations led the government to charge Lord Lloyd of Berwick, a senior Appeal Court Judge and Chairman of the Security Commission, to review past legislation and preview new forms of terrorism. His report, published in 1997, was accompanied by a second report on the threat to the UK from international and domestic terrorism by Professor Paul Wilkinson of St Andrews University, Scotland.

Lloyd recommended that the UK now enact permanent counter-terrorism legislation and put in place a new approach to investigating and punishing terrorist acts based on a new definition of terrorism and a new concept of terrorist offences.<sup>26</sup> It was apparent, however, that these recommendations would require a thorough investigation and that they would take several years to bring to law. The government therefore dealt with the issue in two parts. The most urgent recommendations were included in the Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Act 1998, which made it an offence to conspire to commit crimes abroad, and enabled the courts to order the forfeiture of money and other property of a person convicted of membership of a specified terrorist organisation.<sup>27</sup> The more far-reaching recommendations were included in the Terrorism Act 2000, and the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001.<sup>28</sup>

In January 2000, the UK had signed the UN Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Financing, which filled an important gap in international law, by concentrating on the preparatory act of financing terrorist crimes rather than the acts of terrorism itself, and the UN International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombing. This required signatory states to criminalize defined acts of terrorist bombing and to act upon foreign requests for the extradition of accused terrorists, or submit a case for their prosecution to the state's competent authorities.<sup>29</sup>

The two Acts and the two Conventions therefore struck at the heart of much modern terrorist activity: the international movement of money to fund terrorism and the planning of terrorism in one state to take place in another state. The 2001 Act repealed the PTA, but re-enacted those of its provisions which remained necessary, with a number of modifications. The new Act was now permanent, but the Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Act 1998 again made provision for an annual report to parliament.<sup>30</sup>

*Part One* of the 2000 Act set out a new definition of terrorism, which is similar to that used by the FBI; *Part Two* provided a power for the Home Secretary to proscribe organizations which included those previously banned; *Part Three* detailed offences relating to fundraising and other kinds of financial support for terrorism, together with a power for the courts to order forfeiture of any money or property connected with the offences; *Part Four* provided the police with a power to establish cordons; *Part Five* provided the police with powers to arrest and detain suspected terrorists, broader powers to stop and search vehicles and pedestrians and to impose parking restrictions; *Part Six* provided ancillary offences of weapons training for terrorist purposes, including recruitment, directing a terrorist organisation, possessing articles for terrorist purposes, possessing information for terrorist purposes, and incitement of overseas terrorism; provisions on extra territorial jurisdiction and extradition, which will enable the UK to ratify the above mentioned UN conventions; *Part Seven* provided for the continuation of (Diplock) non-jury trials in Northern Ireland; *Part Eight* contained further technical provisions and definitions. There were 16 additional schedules to the Act, which listed, inter alia, the proscribed organisations, the appeal processes under the Proscribed

Organisations Appeal Commission, further investigative powers and provision for the treatment of suspects.

The 2001 Act granted the government the power to order the forfeiture of cash and property held by convicted terrorists in *Part One*, and the power to make freezing orders over convicted terrorists' possessions in *Part Two*. *Parts Three* and *Four* dealt with disclosure of information, and gave the government the power to detain or deport suspected terrorists. Other Parts gave the government powers in relation to weapons of mass destruction and the security of the nuclear industry. An attempt to graft on new legislation that would ban incitement to religious hatred was contained in *Part Five*, and was subsequently withdrawn, although successfully legislated in separate legislation in 2006. A decision by the House of Lords in December 2004, however, ruled that the detention without trial provisions of the 2001 Act were unlawful and these were allowed to lapse at the time of annual renewal. However the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 was passed, which set out revised powers to allow the government to make control orders imposing movement and other restrictions on terrorist suspects. Control orders do not involve derogating from the European Convention on Human Rights, which had been the source of much criticism and the target for the House of Lords' decision.<sup>31</sup> All legislation and security precautions were subject to continuous assessment in the years immediately following 9/11. These were summarised by the Home Secretary in a report to parliament in 2002.<sup>32</sup>

The latest legislation, the Terrorism Act 2006, finally acknowledged the contemporary nature of GJM terrorism. *Part One* banned the encouragement or indirect incitement of terrorism and makes the dissemination of terrorist publications a criminal offence. Both provisions apply also to Internet activity. It criminalized any act, which could be construed as preparation for terrorist acts, training for terrorism, attendance at a place used for terrorist training and making and possession of devices or materials that could be used for terrorist acts. Other provisions relate to the possession of radioactive devices or material, which could be used for terrorism against nuclear sites. The Miscellaneous Provisions in *Part Two* set out additional grounds for proscription of terrorist organisations taking into account name changes by existing organisations. It further

extended the period of detention by judicial authority to allow the police to investigate before charging.<sup>33</sup> In the wake of 7/7, the government again reviewed the changed nature of the threat, the modus operandi of the GJM and examined what other countries were doing.<sup>34</sup>

The new legislation was contentious and widely criticised. The glorification provisions were regarded by some as too widely drawn and attendance at a place used for terrorism training was alleged by many to preclude genuine journalistic investigation. The government lost the battle to increase detention prior to charging from 14 to 90 days despite its arguments that it needed the time to translate and decode seized electronic files, allow for delays in obtaining intelligence from abroad and the unwillingness of apprehended suspects to talk under interrogation.<sup>35</sup>

## **CONTEST and Prevent**

Since 2006 all counter-terrorism strategies have been incorporated within the CONTEST strategy, which is divided into four principal strands: Prevent, Pursue, Protect, Prepare. The Prevent strand is concerned with the radicalisation process, which sustains international terrorism by: tackling disadvantage, inequality and discrimination; deterring terrorist facilitators by changing the environment in which extremists operate; challenging extremists' ideologies. The Pursue strategy is concerned with disrupting terrorists and their operations in the UK and elsewhere by intelligence gathering; disrupting terrorists' plans; strengthening the legal framework; working with the UK's partners. The Protect strand is concerned with reducing the UK's vulnerability to terrorist attacks by strengthening border security; protecting the national infrastructure; protecting transport links. The Prepare strand is concerned to ensure that the UK is better prepared to withstand terrorist attacks by identifying risks; building resilience by continually evaluating and testing preparedness. The strategies would be formulated and coordinated by the newly established Office for Security and Counter Terrorism, but would be cross departmental.

Police and Security Service action is now aimed at intervention in the early stages of terrorism planning, whereas previously they mostly intervened only after the “execution” stage, when they sought to investigate the crime and bring the perpetrators to justice. Two generic ongoing operations are aimed at investigating the financing of terrorism: Operation “Trammel” and Operation “Fairway”. These are led by the National Counter Terrorism Finance Unit of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch, together with the Treasury. The generic Operation “Driver” and Operation “Rainbow” are aimed at interdicting the logistics phase of a terrorist operation. Operation “Rainbow,” for example, employs mobile police units capable of rapid deployment and charged with apprehending would-be-terrorists in their planning phase. Operation “Lightning” is aimed at apprehending would-be terrorists engaged in reconnaissance and surveillance and employs the use of widely publicised telephone numbers through which members of the public can report suspicious activity. Operation “Clydesdale” and Operation “Kratos” are aimed at preventing terrorist attacks in the execution phase. It was a “Kratos” operation that led to the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes, the Brazilian electrician mistaken for one of the 21 July bombers. At the same time, intelligence- and evidence-gathering operations operate simultaneously and in tandem throughout a counter terrorist operation, whereas previously the evidential track would have been activated only after the execution phase in order to identify and bring the suspects to justice.<sup>36</sup>

The police and Security Service were given additional resources. Britain’s combined police forces were allowed to recruit up to 16,000 more officers nationally, including 6,000 more for the Metropolitan Police Service; £75 million was added to their counter-terrorism capability, with a further £135 million for regional intelligence investigation. The Security Service was allowed to nearly double its size by 2008. In February 2006, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the priority for the government’s spending review was to examine future security needs for intelligence gathering and policing.<sup>37</sup> In the same speech, he announced that nearly £80 million belonging to one hundred organisations linked to Al Qaeda had their assets frozen since 2001, and that under the British presidency in 2005, the European Union brought in new agreements

on international money laundering controls. During 2005 the Lander Review was established into the system of suspicious activity reports, which was completed in March 2006.<sup>38</sup>

The Chancellor also announced an investigation into protecting wire transfers and charities from being used by terrorist organisations. The UK would concentrate now on identifying suspicious transactions in its work with the financial sector by agreeing new guidance to banks on what to target. To aid them, a new forum was being established to allow financial networks to prevent terrorist financing. The pre-emptive asset-freezing regime would be enhanced and would be reviewed within twelve months to establish its effectiveness and to ascertain whether new legislation, or a single asset-freezing office was required.<sup>39</sup> Within the realm of electronic counter measures, Project “Semaphore” would now check the details of all airline traffic and in due course all passengers would be electronically and biometrically screened as part of a move towards an integrated electronic border security system, linking biometric passports and visas with electronic checks on entry and exit.<sup>40</sup> A December 2005 European Union directive on data retention, proposed under the British presidency, now made the storage of phone and internet data for a minimum of six months mandatory, although Britain had urged a two year minimum.<sup>41</sup> The government also planned to introduce identity cards, but public opposition led to partial abandonment of the scheme, although from February 2006 all debit and credit card transactions were required to employ chip and pin technology to counter identity theft and fraud.<sup>42</sup>

## Other Counter-Terrorism Measures

Other measures instituted by the Home Office after 7/7 included the creation of seven working groups of leading Muslims that were tasked with finding solutions to the growth of extremism and radicalization, engaging with Muslim youth, and examining the role of mosques and Imams, under the rubric of “Preventing Extremism Together.” The groups’ and their recommendations were considered by government at the end of September 2005.<sup>43</sup> There was criticism that the government failed to take

forward all the recommendations, but its response was that it was for the Muslim community to act on the majority of the recommendations, and to take the initiative in rooting out extremism.<sup>44</sup>

An effort to marginalize extremist clerics and to ensure that they do not use houses of worship to preach extremism was the object of another Home Office consultation exercise with all faith communities. “Preventing Extremism Together: Places of Worship” was intended to demonstrate that there was sufficient support to enable the government to close places of worship, where extremist ideas are preached, and mosques were the obvious target. However, the responses showed that there was no such support for the plan and many respondents felt that it would impose too wide a restriction on innocent practitioners of faith and that the plan was ill-conceived.<sup>45</sup> In a third initiative, the government planned to change the immigration rules for ministers of religion from abroad, and three main changes were considered: extending the time limit for citizenship tests to four years from the original two years; introduction of a new non-settlement, two-year visa for religious workers to cover persons, who do not actively preach but perform non-pastoral duties; introduction of pre-qualification criteria and an accreditation process for ministers of religion that will be customised to suit each faith tradition.<sup>46</sup>

Among the “Preventing Extremism Together” initiatives that the government adopted, was the creation of a new national council of Imams and mosques, in an effort to impose some national standards and reduce reliance on imported clerics.<sup>47</sup> The Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board was launched on 27 June 2006 with the aim of making Britain’s estimated 1600 mosques accountable and capable of delivering a more professional service.

The second recommendation adopted were visits by government ministers to Muslim communities around the country, and meetings with others, in a campaign to enlist support for its counter-terrorism efforts.<sup>48</sup> This initiative was institutionalised in a travelling roadshow under the banner of “The Radical Middle Way,” but it should be noted that two of the three listed participants, the Federation of Student Islamic Societies, and the Young Muslims Organisation, promote Islamist ideology.<sup>49</sup>

The government now also excludes clerics and activists, who promote extremism and those suspected of terrorist involvement. Since 7/7, it has sought to conclude Memoranda of Understanding with countries to which it intends to return those currently held without charge on suspicion of involvement in terrorism. These are based on agreement that the receiving government will refrain from using inhumane methods, which are banned by international convention.

While the main thrust of the Prevent strategy in 2008 was to focus assistance and support on Muslim community bodies, including womens' and youth groups, via the Pathfinder Fund, and to bypass the umbrella groups, which had previously promoted themselves as representative bodies, the focus of Prevent in 2009 will be to challenge radical ideologies more forcefully in order to disrupt terrorism. Imaginative initiatives include the funding of travelling youth theatre and bands to play to youthful audiences.

## **Alternative Approaches and Conclusions**

It cannot be said that the government failed to learn lessons in the wake of either 9/11 or 7/7. After both events it instituted far-reaching inquiries into existing legislation and took advice on how to act from many quarters. It also cannot be faulted for not realizing that there were new trends emerging, which were likely to impact on the UK itself. Numerous warnings were given that an attack within the UK was only a matter of time. If there is comment to be made, it is firstly in relation to the pre-9/11 period, when Britain was slow to realize the threat posed by allowing jihad veterans and foreign Islamist activists to operate unhindered. It failed, and realised only too late, to understand the importance of Islamist ideology that has penetrated parts of the Muslim community and which provides the conveyor belt or springboard to terrorist involvement. Islamists generally are not interested in interfaith dialogue: they are bent on extending the reach of the Ummah and imposing their version of Shariah, by violence if necessary, in addition to expelling any non-Muslim presence from historical Muslim territory. It was also short-sighted just

to concentrate on extremism in mosques. The cases of Richard Reid and other would be suicide bombers, and the 7/7 terrorists, had showed that moderate mosques leaders sought to exclude extremists who then turned to youth clubs, college campuses, gymnasia, book clubs and the Internet for recruitment purposes.

Second, in seeking to engage with the Muslim community more effectively, the government engaged primarily with extremists, thereby isolating many moderates. This was a consequence of its failure to understand Islamist strategies. The Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, and the 'roadshow' are still dominated by Islamists. They will not effectively promote non-political moderate Islam unless they are made more representative of Muslim communities' real views and not those of the campaigning groups.

Third, it is apparent that there are inconsistencies in the government's approach. The Foreign Office engages with extremists abroad because it says it wants to hear their views, and because some are barred from entering the UK, while the Prime Minister and Home Office officials insist that they will tackle extremism. It was the Islamists that the government engaged with until 2008, thereby sidelining the moderate majority. There was much media comment on the choice of some members of the Home Office working groups, and at least one resignation as a consequence. In the words of one prominent and respected moderate leader, the government had 'the right train and it's on the right track but it's got the wrong passengers on it'.<sup>50</sup> Inconsistencies are still apparent in exclusion policies, which ban some Islamists leaders, who preach violence, while allowing in others.

Britain's traditional emphasis on 'race' rather than 'religion' led to a general failure to understand the crucial importance that religion plays. Terrorism in Britain is the product of the penetration of Islamist ideologies, to which has been added Muslim rage at world events and the hitherto tolerated presence of jihad veterans and recruiters. These factors united some within the different Muslim diaspora communities and propelled them onto the path of terrorism. A more understanding, consistent and forcefully presented policy from the outset might well have avoided the problems that Britain now faces.

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43. The full report is published at [http://www.communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceandfaith/repoirts\\_pubs/publications/race\\_race\\_faith/PET-working-groups-aug.oct05](http://www.communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceandfaith/repoirts_pubs/publications/race_race_faith/PET-working-groups-aug.oct05)
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# The Spillover Effect: Canadian Diasporas and Terrorism

*Stewart Bell*

## Introduction

Canada is sometimes described as a cultural mosaic, compared to the melting pot of the United States. But just as it hosts a mosaic of cultures, Canada also hosts a mosaic of terrorist organizations. Individuals and organizations within a broad array of immigrant communities are intensely involved in homeland conflicts in which terrorist tactics are commonly used, such as Sri Lanka's civil war and the various Middle East conflicts. "Canada has a history of spillover effects from conflicts based in other countries," writes the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS).<sup>1</sup>

The hundreds of targets of Canadian counter-terrorism agencies have their origins in a wide range of countries – among them, Lebanon, Pakistan, Iran, Algeria, Colombia and Somalia. The former director of CSIS, Ward Elcock, once said there were more foreign terrorist organizations active in Canada than in any country in the world, with the possible exception of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Since the early 1980s, when Armenian *émigrés* began assassinating Turkish officials in Canada, the country has served as an important offshore base for almost every major terrorist campaign in the world, notably the Sikh Khalistan movement, Hezbollah, the Tamil Tigers, Mujahedin-e Khalq, Algerian Armed Islamic Group and GSPC, Egyptian Al Jihad and Al Qaeda. In each case, these groups have drawn varying degrees of support from diasporas in Canada. "The portability of homeland conflicts offers a particular challenge to Canada's counter-terrorism efforts," says a CSIS report. "Canadians have embraced the commitment to a multicultural society. Most immigrants or refugees

coming to Canada do so only to seek a peaceful existence, often fleeing violent conflicts. In some cases, however, these conflicts are difficult to leave behind.”<sup>3</sup>

Canadian support and operational networks provide terrorist groups with sympathy, lobbying, propaganda, funding, weapons, intelligence, safe haven, recruits and in some cases they have conducted target reconnaissance, attack planning and terrorism. While Canada’s security troubles are in many ways similar to those of Europe, the country has the additional challenge caused by its open refugee system and long, unfortified border with the United States, currently one of the world’s pre-eminent terrorist targets. The “Millenium Bomber” Ahmed Ressam and more recent intelligence concerning Hezbollah demonstrate that some terrorists view Canada as a convenient base from which to launch attacks within North America.

Homeland conflicts have preoccupied Canadian counter-terrorism investigators for more than two decades, and will likely remain a problem for Canada, given its welcoming immigration system, human rights safeguards and historic reluctance to embrace national security measures. At the same time, Canada is witnessing the emergence of “homegrown” Islamist extremist youth, who are supporting or planning acts of terrorist violence not necessarily in furtherance of homeland causes, but rather as their contribution to what they view as a global Jihad. This paper will analyze both the homeland and homegrown threats confronting Canada, and discuss how the country is attempting to deal with them.

## **Canadian Diasporas and Terrorism**

International terrorism in Canada has traditionally been the result of the “spillover effect,” in which immigrants bring to Canada the political, religious, ethnic or nationalist conflicts of their ancestral homelands. This began to emerge in Canada in the 1970s when the IRA and anti-Castro groups became active. But it was in the 1980s that homeland terrorism really took root in Canada. Armenian extremists were the first to spill blood, staging a series of assassination attempts, beginning in 1982 with

the shooting of a Turkish diplomat in Ottawa by the Beirut-based Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia. Later, a Turkish military attaché was gunned down, as he was driving to work in Ottawa.<sup>4</sup>

The Babbar Khalsa established a base of operations in British Columbia and Ontario in the early 1980s to support its fight for a Sikh homeland in India's Punjab. Despite its involvement in terrorism in India, the Canadian government gave the Babbar Khalsa charity status, allowing its supporters to claim their donations as income tax deductions. In effect, the Canadian government (presumably unwittingly) subsidized the BK's activities. Sikh extremists seized control of Canadian temples and institutions, and violently suppressed opposition to their activities within the Sikh community. In 1985, following the Indian government's raid on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Sikh extremists placed suitcase bombs on two Air India flights in Vancouver. One exploded at Narita Airport in Japan, killing two baggage handlers while the other detonated off the coast of Ireland, killing all 329 aboard. The prime suspect, Canadian Babbar leader Talwinder Singh Parmar, was later killed in India. Two other suspects were put on trial in Vancouver but acquitted in 2005, partly due to problems with the investigation and witnesses.<sup>5</sup> The Canadian government ordered an inquiry into the Air India investigation, in the hope of learning from past mistakes and providing answers to the victims' families more than two decades after the fact.

Hezbollah support networks began to emerge within Canada's Lebanese community in the early 1990s. A joint police auto theft project in the eastern provinces of Quebec and Ontario discovered that some of the crime groups involved were linked to Hezbollah, and were either paying a tax to Hezbollah or shipping luxury cars to the group in Lebanon. Investigators also uncovered charities that were financing Hezbollah, but they were unable to take action because of claims the money was earmarked for social services in Lebanon rather than weapons. In the late 1990s, CSIS conducted surveillance of a Hezbollah procurement ring in Vancouver. Hezbollah was sending shopping lists to its Canadian operatives, who would then purchase the materiel and ship it to Lebanon by courier. Some of the money to pay for the purchases came from a cigarette smuggling ring in North Carolina known as the Charlotte Hezbollah Cell.<sup>6</sup>

The LTTE has been one of the most active foreign terrorist groups in Canada. Canada has the largest Sri Lankan Tamil community outside South Asia<sup>7</sup>, and some segments are ardent Tamil nationalists and supporters of the Tigers. Pro-LTTE rallies in Toronto attract tens of thousands of demonstrators. The Canadian LTTE network, sometimes called the Snow Tigers, has been problematic to Canada from a national security perspective. The first person charged under the terrorist finance provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act was a suspected fundraiser for the Tamil Tigers. The first Canadian non-profit group to be added to Canada's list of designated terrorist entities was the World Tamil Movement, a suspected front for the Tamil Tigers. The biggest terrorism finance investigation since 9/11 is the investigation into the Toronto fundraising network of the Tamil Tigers. Another national security investigation, Project "Onedle," was conducted jointly by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and FBI, and resulted in three Canadians pleading guilty to trying to buy Russian SA-18 heat-seeking missiles and AK-47s for the Tamil Tigers. The Canada Border Services Agency has been trying to deport several Tamil Tigers, some of whom held senior positions in the movement before they arrived. The landmark Supreme Court of Canada decision on deportation and torture concerned the case of Manickavasagam Suresh, an alleged Tamil Tigers fundraiser. The Tigers even infiltrated the RCMP at one point; a translator employed by the police force turned out to be a former rebel fighter.

Propaganda is one of the LTTE support network's main activities. The other is fundraising. A few months after Canada enacted its Anti-terrorism Act, the RCMP launched Project "Osaluki" to investigate LTTE financing activities in Canada. (In Quebec, a related investigation was called Project "Crible," and there was a smaller investigation in Vancouver.) The investigation focused on the World Tamil Movement, considered the primary front organization of the Tamil Tigers in Canada. According to police reports<sup>8</sup>, the investigators uncovered a sophisticated money collection system that targeted Tamil Canadians. At its core was a pre-authorized payment scheme. Tamil Canadians were identified, approached by pro-LTTE activists, and asked to sign a form that would allow the World Tamil Movement to make monthly withdrawals from their bank accounts. Most of the forms were signed in Canada but police

also interviewed witnesses, who said they had signed them at Tamil Tigers checkpoints in Sri Lanka. “Upon their return to Canada, these persons were visited by representatives of the World Tamil Movement to exact the collection of the monthly stipend,” the RCMP wrote.<sup>9</sup>

One Toronto woman told Human Rights Watch<sup>10</sup> that during a visit to Sri Lanka in 2005 she was told to report to an LTTE office. “They asked how long I had been living abroad and if I had contributed any money while abroad. I said I hadn’t. I told them I was living on welfare and had children. I said it was very difficult, so I didn’t give money ... The LTTE told me, ‘When you go back, you should give money. You should help our struggle. It is your obligation to help us.’ I agreed that when I got back I would give money month to month. I felt I had to agree, because I was in their territory. I was afraid that if I refused, they would demand the money then. They asked for \$50 per month. I said I couldn’t afford \$50, but would pay \$30. They finally agreed on \$40 a month and said I should pay it to the World Tamil Movement. They asked me to fill out a form and sign it. It included my home address, name, and the amount I had agreed to pay.”

After she returned to Toronto, a World Tamil Movement representative called within a week, then came to her home. “He had all the information, including my passport number. He said, ‘I’m from the World Tamil Movement. You said in Sri Lanka that you would give money. I am here to collect it.’ He had a printout and I could see other peoples’ names. It had my name and children’s names, my passport number, and my address.” Eventually, she agreed to pay the amount she had pledged.<sup>11</sup> Dozens of Tamil Canadians have told similar stories to the RCMP. The WTM took in up to \$763,000 a year using the payment scheme. On a single day in 2005, the WTM withdrew \$63,528 from 1,582 bank accounts.<sup>12</sup> “It is obvious from the amounts collected with this method that the pre-authorized payment scheme is effective, timely and spares valued resources,” says an RCMP report.<sup>13</sup>

While the RCMP investigation into Tamil Tigers fundraising began in 2002, the federal government did not designate the LTTE as a terrorist entity under Canadian law until the Conservatives came to office in 2006, replacing the Liberal Party, which had refused three requests from

its security agencies to ban the Tigers. Shortly after the decision to list the LTTE was made public, police searched the Montreal and Toronto offices of the World Tamil Movement. In Toronto, police hired a moving truck to haul away thousands of documents, as well as computers and LTTE paraphernalia. Among the items seized: A letter from LTTE Supreme Commander Velupillai Prabhakaran asking his Canadian supporters for \$3-million; a letter from the head of the LTTE's International Secretariat, asking for money for the Sea Tigers naval wing; and Elections Canada voter lists, with the Tamil-sounding names highlighted (it is illegal to possess a voters list except for elections purposes). Police also found detailed information about the pre-authorized bank payment scheme. "Significant evidence of terrorist financing was found," the RCMP wrote, "including pre-authorized loan forms, well-organized ledger and receipt books formatted by postal code, indicating names of contributors and collectors, and large quantities of LTTE propaganda materials, and merchandise."

Forensic accountants were able to identify \$3-million worth of bank transfers from the WTM to overseas accounts, most of them linked to the LTTE, from 2002 to 2006. "The bank records seized ... demonstrate that the World Tamil Movement has developed an elaborate machine like entity that moves throughout the Greater Toronto Area collecting funds with extreme proficiency," the police wrote. The RCMP said the WTM's financial set-up was "congruent with the money laundering techniques often employed by organized crime groups." The LTTE support network has been damaged by Project "Osaluki," Project "Crible" and Project "Onedle," as well as efforts by the Ontario Provincial Police to clamp down on pro-Tiger events around Toronto. But the Sri Lankan conflict continues to have a significant impact on Canada's national security apparatus, not to mention its immigration and refugee system.

A variety of other violent groups have had a presence in Canada, from the Eritrean Liberation Front to the Polisario Front to the Basque ETA (two wanted ETA members were caught in 2007 in Canada). Intelligence officials have been investigating allegations that segments of the Somali community have traveled to Mogadishu to fight with the Islamic Courts Union. The Kurdish (PKK) has "many" sympathizers in Canada

and has staged “a number of violent protests in Canada.”<sup>14</sup> Canada has primarily been a financial and propaganda base for Middle Eastern terrorist groups, although following Israel’s assassination of Hamas founder Ahmad Yassin, a Muslim youth firebombed a Jewish school in Montreal and left a note claiming responsibility threatening further violence in the name of the Sheikh Ahmad Yassin Brigades. In the fall of 2003, Israeli troops arrested a Palestinian-Canadian as he was exiting Gaza on his way to Cairo airport to catch a flight back to Canada. Israeli officials say he had been recruited and trained by Hamas to assassinate a visiting Israeli dignitary in North America, or alternatively to attack Jewish targets in Canada. He pleaded guilty and served a five-year sentence in the Negev desert.<sup>15</sup>

Another homeland cause that has drawn support in Canada is the Iranian Mujahedin-e Khalq, or MEK (also known as the Peoples Mujahedin of Iran or PMOI). The Canadian MEK network has operated safehouses to raise money and recruit young Iranian-Canadians for the cause. Of the roughly 3,000 people at the MEK compound at Camp Ashraf, Iraq, about 50 were either Canadian citizens or claim some immigration status in Canada. The MEK was shaken by the U.S. capture of Ashraf and the arrest in France of its leader Miriam Rijavi, but it has been reinvigorated by rising international opposition to the Iranian regime’s nuclear ambitions, and has been courting Western conservative politicians with some success. While outlawed under Canada’s anti-terrorism law, the MEK has ramped up its lobbying efforts hoping to capitalize on anti-Iran sentiment. Its immediate goal is to get the MEK removed from Western government lists of designated terrorist groups.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Iranian intelligence operatives mounted their own foreign interference campaign to paint the MEK as ruthless terrorists who brainwash and abuse their own mujahedin.

Canada’s experience with Islamist extremism dates back to the Soviet War in Afghanistan. Following the war, Arab Afghans began arriving in Canada. Among the targets of this era was Ahmed Khadr, a Canadian charity worker, who has been widely linked to Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al Zawahiri, and who is accused of raising money at Canadian mosques for widows, orphans and refugees but diverting it to paramili-

tary training camps. He would also provide reference letters to those, who wanted to train at the camps, according to Canadian intelligence.<sup>17</sup> Related to the Khadr Group is the Kassem Daher network, which was headed by a Lebanese-Canadian indicted in the U.S. for his alleged role in recruiting and fundraising for various mujahedin groups.

In Montreal, the Groupe Fateh Kamel was composed primarily of North Africans linked to the GIA and later its splinter the GSPC (Salafist Group for Call and Combat). Named after its leader, a Canadian citizen of Algerian origin, this group gained notoriety when one of its associates, Ahmed Ressay, returned from training in Afghanistan and attempted to bomb Los Angeles International Airport at the dawn of the millennium. The key members of this group have been arrested although none was ever charged by Canada. Ressay was convicted by a Los Angeles jury. Kamel was convicted by a French court but was released from prison in 2005 and has now returned to Montreal, where he lives freely.

While most immigrants and refugees come to Canada as a result of “pull factors” such as the desire for jobs and security, some Islamist extremists migrate due to “push factors,” according to Canadian intelligence. In some cases, they were no longer welcome in homelands such as Egypt or Syria due to their involvement in extremist activities. In other cases, they may have been “pre-positioned” to Canada by terrorist networks for financial, logistical or operational purposes. In Canada, “several suspected terrorist cell members . . . have been uncovered,” according to a report by Canada’s threat assessment agency. “The Canadian experience with Islamic extremism has been that while most immigrants are not terrorists, most Islamic terrorists have been immigrants.”<sup>18</sup>

After 9/11, Sunni Islamist extremism became the major focus of Canadian counter-terrorism investigators. Within this target group, investigators are pre-occupied with three subgroups.<sup>19</sup> First, jihadist returnees – those extremists in Canada, who have attended terrorist training camps or otherwise participated in jihadist conflicts around the world. They serve as role models for youth, and are sometimes directly involved in recruiting. They have extreme ideological beliefs, as well as the paramilitary training to act on them. Canada has initiated deportation proceedings against several suspected returnees who are not Canadian

citizens. But the Supreme Court of Canada has made it more difficult to remove non-citizens, who fear torture. Those who have Canadian citizenship, either through birth or naturalization, cannot be deported. They can only be charged with a criminal offence, but Canada does not yet have a strong record of prosecuting terrorists. The Anti-Terrorism Act was only enacted after 9/11, and it is not retroactive, so those, who participated in terrorist training, or operational activities before that date cannot be charged with terrorist offences. Those who return from Islamist extremist activities abroad, may be known to the intelligence service and put under surveillance. But surveillance is labour intensive and not always perfect. Ahmed Ressam was under surveillance but still managed to travel to Afghanistan for training, return to Canada and build a bomb. And with the United States just a short drive away, it is possible returnees could slip away to do harm, possibly using forged or stolen travel documents. The Americans have expressed concerns about this. They have issued Seeking Information alerts for several Canadians, whose whereabouts are unknown, such as Abderaouf Jdey and Amer El Maati, and indicted several others, who have returned to Canada without being charged by Canadian authorities. When Canadian Al Qaeda recruit Mohammed Jabarah returned to Canada in 2002 after training in Afghanistan and making an aborted effort to bomb the American and Israeli embassies in Singapore, Canadian police could find no grounds to arrest him. The Americans, however, did lay charges and he remains in U.S. custody, after pleading guilty and receiving a life sentence. Similarly, when Abdullah Khadr returned to Canada in late 2005 from Pakistan, he told police he had supplied weapons, ammunition and explosives to Al Qaeda for attacks against coalition troops in Afghanistan and that he had been part of a plot to assassinate the Pakistani Prime Minister. But, again, he was not arrested by Canadian authorities. Only when the U.S. laid charges and requested his extradition was he arrested.

A second subgroup are converts to radical Islam. An estimated 3,000 Canadians are converting to Islam each year and some are becoming adherents of its radical strain.<sup>20</sup> Converts are being actively recruited by terrorist networks due to their familiarity with Canada and their ability to evade security measures. They are sometimes recruited out of anti-social

backgrounds, such as the prison system.<sup>21</sup> Converts may be difficult to detect because they do not fit conventional profiles typical of extremism in terms of national origin or travel history. “Islamic extremists value these individuals, because their appearance and ability to blend into Western countries increase their chances of successfully carrying out terrorist acts,” according to Canada’s threat assessment agency.<sup>22</sup>

The third subgroup are the homegrown extremist youth. CSIS reports that a “high percentage” of Islamist extremists are now Canadian-born. “Increasingly, we are learning of more and more extremists that are homegrown. The implications of this shift are important,” the agency reports.<sup>23</sup> This “new generation” is described by CSIS as computer literate and highly educated. They speak excellent English, are familiar with Canadian customs and have no difficulty blending into Western society. They are sometimes being raised within strictly extremist households, and are very committed to their cause. Other times, they are rebelling against the moderate parents. CSIS calls these youths “a significant threat to national security” and “a clear and present danger to Canada and its allies.”<sup>24</sup>

In the past, those involved in international terrorist groups tended to be foreigners who came to Canada from elsewhere, often as undocumented refugees, which meant they had to cross a border, and undergo basic security screening. But homegrown terrorists, by definition, are emerging from within national borders. They were either born or raised in Canada, have Canadian passports, speak perfect English and do not stand out in Canada’s multi-ethnic cities. They may have never been to an overseas training camp, although some have undergone physical training in Canada and abroad in Pakistan. They often have no apparent connection to terrorism. To quote CSIS, these youths are dangerous because “their knowledge of Canada and by extension Western society renders them a valuable resource for international Islamic extremists, who need individuals to infiltrate our countries to carry out terrorist acts.”<sup>25</sup>

Amidst these emerging security trends, the primary role of diasporas has been incitement and recruitment. In interviews with the author, Canadian Muslims have described how they were lured into extremist ideology by radical leaders, who trumpeted anti-Western politics, as well

as Al Qaeda recruiting DVDs distributed at mosques or that they found on the Internet. Canada's arrests of terror suspects since 9/11, as well as its military deployment to Afghanistan have provided additional fodder for Islamists seeking to indoctrinate Canadian youths into the extremist mindset.

The first major homegrown Islamist terrorist to emerge from Canada was Mohammed Mansour Jabarah. Born in Kuwait in 1981, Jabarah moved to Canada with his family in 1994 and lived south of Toronto in the city of St. Catharines, where his father was vice-president of the mosque. During a summer visit to Kuwait in 1996, Jabarah met a teacher named Sulayman Abu Gaith, a jihadi veteran, who showed him recruiting videos. Jabarah returned to Canada, but nurtured his interest in jihad through several channels. He surfed the Internet, looking at websites that glorified Palestinian and Chechen mujahedin. "Once hooked into these webs of information, susceptibility to recruitment increases," CSIS writes.<sup>26</sup> Jabarah also befriended veterans of jihadi conflicts in Afghanistan and Bosnia. After finishing high school, Jabarah went back to Kuwait and then flew to Karachi, where he met up with Al Qaeda operatives, who took him to Peshawar, the Khyber Pass and into Jalalabad. After training for a year, he formally joined Al Qaeda by swearing bayat. Bin Laden sent Jabarah to Karachi to train under Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, who launched him to Southeast Asia to work with Jemaah Islamiyah. Singapore soon found out about the plot to bomb Western embassies and began arresting members of Jabarah's cell. Jabarah escaped but was captured in Oman. Two Canadian intelligence agents brought him back to Canada, then helped him surrender to the United States.<sup>27</sup> While Jabarah was approached by a recruiter in Kuwait, the radical ideas he was introduced to in the Gulf were nurtured in Canada. Canadian intelligence has found the same pattern with other extremists. "All of them find diverse ways to maintain their extremist beliefs in Canada through a variety of networks, both real and virtual," CSIS writes.<sup>28</sup> Jabarah was an immigrant, who was at least partly radicalized abroad, but Momin Khawaja was born in Canada. Two years after Jabarah was captured, Khawaja was arrested in Ottawa. Khawaja had surfaced during a British investigation codenamed Operation "Crevice" that was monitoring a group of British Pakistanis

accused of plotting bombing attacks in the United Kingdom. Khawaja was convicted in 2008.

Following Khawaja's arrest, Canadian intelligence began investigating a group of homegrown extremists, who were allegedly intent on targeting Canada itself. The "Toronto 18" case was initiated in response to exchanges that were taking place on Internet forums. The accused ringleaders, Fahim Ahmad and Zakaria Amara, developed linkages with extremists in several countries, notably Pakistan, Britain and the United States. After police in Bosnia, Britain and Scandinavia began making arrests in their respective countries, the RCMP launched its own investigation, Project "Osage," which was conducted parallel to the CSIS probe (CSIS is an intelligence-gathering agency only, while the RCMP is responsible for law enforcement).

A few weeks after the police investigation had begun, the suspects traveled to a remote property north of Toronto, where they allegedly underwent 12 days of paramilitary training and indoctrination in the snow. According to the Crown allegations, they subsequently began compiling materials for truck bombings in downtown Toronto, which were to target the CSIS regional headquarters and the Toronto Stock Exchange. Another plan involved storming the Parliament Buildings, taking Members of Parliament hostage and beheading them on television, unless Canadian troops were pulled out of Afghanistan and Muslim prisoners were released. Investigators penetrated the group, however, and made arrests. At the time of this writing, one youth had been convicted and ten were awaiting trial. Charges against the other seven were stayed.

The CSIS analysis branch has been studying homegrown radicalization since at least 2005 and has identified several factors behind it. One of the most important is family ties. CSIS has been reporting a trend in which fathers with extreme beliefs are raising their children to be extreme believers. An example is the Khadr family, which has been described by one sibling as an "Al Qaeda family." The father Ahmed Khadr immigrated to Canada from Egypt in the 1970s, married a Palestinian Canadian and had six children, four boys and two girls. He sent some of the boys to the weapons training camps around Jalalabad. One of them, Abdurahman, says his father tried to convince him to become a suicide bomber.

Khadr's efforts to radicalize his children proved devastating. His son Omar was accused of killing a US soldier in Afghanistan and was taken to Guantanamo Bay. Abdurrahman was also captured in Afghanistan and sent to Guantanamo, although he says he was recruited by the CIA. He has since returned to Canada. The youngest son Karim was shot during a gunfight in the Waziristan tribal area of Pakistan. He is severely disabled. Ahmed Khadr was killed during that same battle. The oldest son Abdullah returned to Canada late in 2005 and was arrested on charges alleging he had supplied weapons to Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The oldest daughter Zaynab was investigated by the RCMP, which claimed she was involved in helping her father finance Al Qaeda training camps, but she was never charged.

A second factor in radicalization is the presence of a charismatic spiritual leader or father figure who guides youths to extremism. This appears to have been the case with Jabarah and others such as Rudwan Khalil of Vancouver, an aspiring male model, who studied under an extremist cleric and, according to the Russian FSB, joined a Chechen rebel faction and was killed by security forces in October, 2004. A third factor is religious conversion. A fourth is an identification with the global Muslim community, and the interpretation of the plight of that community through an extremist prism, which claims the West is waging a war against Islam, thus justifying violent jihad and terrorism. A final factor is the Internet, which facilitates the radicalization process in Western countries. "Radicalization of teenagers and younger children in Canada is ongoing," says a CSIS intelligence report.<sup>29</sup> Reads another, "If the factors that drive radicalization do not abate, including the perception that Islam is under attack, it is expected that radicalization and hence the need for counter-radicalization measures will increase."<sup>30</sup>

## The Canadian Response

Canada is highly vulnerable to terrorist organizations looking for a base of support. It is an open, liberal-democratic, immigrant-friendly, human rights society that borders the U.S., making it, to some, "a preferred jihad

access route to America.”<sup>31</sup> According to one report, roughly half of all refugee claimants are accepted, compared with just over 10% in the rest of the Western world, and those that are rejected are often not removed. The Supreme Court has put up barriers against the deportation of terrorists who fear torture, and has also ruled that anyone who sets foot in Canada has the full rights of a Canadian citizen.<sup>32</sup>

While Canada has natural vulnerabilities, there is little public recognition that terrorism is a problem for Canada, and little in the way of public debate on the issue. In a poll conducted for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs shortly after the January 23, 2006 election, only 4% of Canadians ranked fighting terrorism as the new government’s most pressing foreign policy issue.<sup>33</sup> In another post-election poll, 43% of Canadians responded that Canada should not be involved in the war on terror, and 62% were against sending troops to Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup> To quote the Canadian Senator Colin Kenney, when he was Chairman of the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence: “Never has the combined physical and economic threat to the Canadian homeland been more palpable, but rarely have Canadians been more sanguine about their well-being.”<sup>35</sup>

That may have changed somewhat following the arrests of the Toronto 18 and the disclosure of the alleged plots to stage attacks in Canada, but while Canada has long been a base for many terrorist groups, most of their violence has been against foreign targets. For the most part, made-in-Canada or Canadian-supported terrorist attacks have occurred either in other countries, or have been aimed at specific targets, or ethnic groups within Canada. Since Canadians have not recently experienced the bloody consequences of terrorism up close – not since the Air India bombings in 1985 – they may find it easy to shrug off the current threat of terrorism. The Canadian government has also done a poor job of communicating the threat, and the necessity for counter-measures. In the days after the 9/11 attacks, then-Prime Minister Jean Chrétien told the House of Commons, there were no terrorists in Canada – a statement that was clearly not true. According to a 2006 paper by former Ambassador Martin Collcott, other factors include the influence of special interest groups and concerns among politicians that taking a hard line against terror-

ism could cost them voter support. He also mentions Canada's policy of official multiculturalism: "The result of official multicultural policy has been that the commitment of newcomers to Canada is in many cases subordinate to the loyalties and enmities they developed before arriving on our shores."<sup>36</sup>

Canada began to reshape its national security apparatus following the 9/11 attacks. Parliament enacted the Anti-terrorism Act, which defined terrorism and outlawed it. The government created Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams, made up of representatives of various agencies involved in counter-terrorism. The Integrated National Security Assessment Centre was created as an inter-agency threat assessment body, now known as the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre. FINTRAC was created to monitor terrorism finance and money-laundering. The Communications Security Establishment, the signals intelligence service, was granted new powers to monitor communications with one "foot" in Canada, and to set up an anti-terrorism unit. The Canadian military also played a role. Troops were sent Afghanistan and the Navy was dispatched to patrol the Persian Gulf but Canada has not officially joined the war in Iraq, which is unpopular with most Canadians. A National Security Policy setting out the broad objectives of the government was unveiled in 2004.<sup>37</sup>

Fighting terrorism is clearly more complex, where terrorist organizations have backing within diasporas. In such cases, Canadian counter-terrorism investigators have run into obstacles, such as difficulties in recruiting sources, the concealment of terrorist support activity within community institutions and attempts to interfere with investigations. Some diasporas have also used propaganda and lobbying tactics to win the support of politicians and portray the violent activities of foreign terrorist group as part of a legitimate liberation struggle, or self-defence. In a 2007 Environics poll of Canadian Muslims, 12% of respondents thought that terrorist attacks against Canada were justified. In an Internet forum, one Toronto youth wrote:

If there were any planned attacks against Canadian/American soldiers by 'Muslim militants' in Canadian soil, I'd support it ... Canadian

soldiers in Canadian soil who are training to go to Afghanistan or Iraq are legitimate targets to be killed. ... Now it is POSSIBLE AND LEGITIMATE!! ... believe me, if we could have enough of our soldiers killed, then we'd be forced to withdraw from Afghanistan. ...I enjoy watching the blood flow from the Western troops.<sup>38</sup>

Despite these challenges, Canadian security agencies have had successes. Canada has not yet experienced an Islamist extremist terrorist attack, despite having been named as a target country by Osama bin Laden. One case study is the dismantling of a group of suspected Salafist Group for Call and Combat members in Toronto. The investigation centred around Nourrdine Zendaoui, an Algerian who had come to Canada as a refugee in 1998 and found work as a school bus driver. Investigators discovered that Zendaoui was an explosives expert, who had fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s and early '90s, and that he had been an instructor at the Khaldun camp, and had later participated in the conflict in Chechnya. CSIS put Zendaoui under surveillance and eventually confronted him as part of a disruption campaign. He promptly left Canada and returned to Algeria. Within a year, four of his associates had been deported. While using the immigration system as a terror-fighting tool has been effective enough to date, the emergence of the new generation of homegrown extremists poses complex new challenges for Canada.

In addition to disrupting extremist groups and emerging plots, Canada has attempted to develop a strategy against youth radicalization.<sup>39</sup> The four counter-radicalization techniques employed in Canada are: intervention with at-risk youth, arrests and incarceration, outreach and a whole-of-government approach. "One important assessment that has universal acceptance is that individuals at the initial stages of radicalization are more susceptible to change or diversion than those at the latter stages," a CSIS report says. "If those at the beginning are still assessing their interest in joining a group or ideology, intervention should be able, in theory, to lead them down a less dangerous path."

Outreach is the most high-profile part of the program. The RCMP, CSIS and other agencies have met with community groups to discuss radicalization. The purpose of outreach is to "encourage community and

religious leaders to take steps to monitor and counter the radicalization process in their communities.” Lesser known is a tactic the report calls “disruption/intervention,” which it describes as “the active intervention of a security or law enforcement agency, together with other partners, with an individual, whose activities are cause for concern.” Intervention tactics include interviewing youths identified as at-risk, and sometimes speaking with their families, or close associates, “and on occasion presenting the individual with evidence of activities deemed injurious to national security.”<sup>40</sup> But officials say that while counter-radicalization is taking place, a government-wide national strategy has not yet been implemented.

There are also indications the community has started to tackle radicalization on its own. The Masjid al-Noor in Toronto has proposed a “12-step extremist detox program” for radical Muslims that may be the first of its kind in Canada.<sup>41</sup> The Specialized de-radicalization intervention program is intended to provide “treatment and counselling” to young Muslims sympathetic to the Al Qaeda ideology. The Muslim leaders behind the program say they want to help parents concerned about the radicalization of their children and also assist courts in dealing with terrorism-related cases. “As Canadians of Muslim faith, it is our ardent desire to become leaders in the championing of anti-terror values,” said a document outlining the program, which is based on the idea that extremism can be fought theologically, by challenging the dark extremist vision with an alternative interpretation of Islam. But some Canadian Muslim groups downplay extremism as a problem, complain about racial-profiling and promote the narrative that Muslims are being terrorized by excessive counter-terrorism.

Following the Gaza Offensive, during which protesters in Canada yelled anti-Jewish statements, the Conservative government became more aggressive in speaking out against racial intolerance, and vowed to cut off federal funding to groups, such as the Canadian Arab Federation. Security was a priority for the Conservatives during their first term of office. The government vowed to increase funding to the RCMP and CSIS, speed up the deportation of foreign terrorists and expand Canada’s foreign intelligence capabilities.<sup>42</sup> Some of this was accomplished but in the party’s second term the focus has shifted to the economy, and with

only a minority in Parliament, the Conservatives lack the ability to make major policy changes without opposition consent.

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# Terrorism and the Muslim Diaspora in the United States

*Jocelyne Cesari*

## Introduction

Even after 9/11, Islam remains the fastest-growing religion in the United States. Its growth is mainly due to the rapid influx of immigrants and the relatively high birthrate among them, but the number of African American, Euro-American and Hispanic converts is also increasing. The U.S. census does not include questions of religious affiliation: nonetheless, the most current estimates put the number of Muslims in the United States at approximately four to six million.<sup>1</sup> What is unique to the American situation is that almost half of all Muslims in the United States (46% according to a 1994 estimate<sup>2</sup>) are converts.

The majority of these converts come from within the Afro-American community. Thirty percent of these African-American Muslims adopted Islam, while serving prison terms, following the model of figures, such as Malcolm X or imam Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, the former Black Panther, once known as H. Rap Brown. Another 56% of Muslims in the United States claim a variety of geographic and ethnic origins. Arabs are not at all the dominant minority (numbering 12.45% of all U.S. Muslims) and are far outnumbered by groups from the Asian subcontinent (24.4%). After that come immigrants from Africa (6.2%), Iran (3.6%) and Turkey (2.4%)<sup>3</sup>. There are also differences of belief and practice between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and still further differences among Shi'a groups like the Ithna'Ashari (to which most Iranians adhere) and the Nizari Isma'ilis (followers of the Aga Khan). There are those, whose Islamic identity is contested by mainstream Muslims, such as the Ahmadis and the Druze (Haddad and Smith 1993). Finally, there are the Sufis, whose charismatic

Sunni and Shi'a leaders teach a mystical approach to Islam; Sufis in the U.S. tend to come from diverse backgrounds and many are Euro-American converts (Hermansen 1997).

The largest immigrant groups, Arab Muslims and South Asian Muslims, are quite distinct from one another. Arabs tend to be far more diverse in terms of their national histories and colonial pasts, coming from countries, as different as Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Morocco (and, in smaller numbers, from the other North African nations, Saudi Arabia, and various Persian Gulf states). Arabs have been coming to the U.S. since the late nineteenth century. Until the 1960s, however, the majority of Arab immigrants to the U.S. were Christians. South Asian Muslims, mostly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, share the history of the Asian subcontinent and most immigrated following the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act. While speakers of Arabic tend more often to hold prominent positions within Islam as imams or clerics in mosques or educational settings, South Asians tend to have a higher socioeconomic profile and are arguably more privileged within American society.

This chapter will analyze the sociological and political condition of American Muslims and discuss factors that increase, or decrease their potential for involvement in terrorist activities.

## **Islam in North America: “Deferred Visibility”<sup>4</sup>**

The Islamic revival taking place in Muslim countries has also had an impact in the United States, specifically in terms of the visibility of Islam. In the 1970s, immigrants from the middle classes and the intelligentsia in Muslim countries began to immigrate to America in large numbers. Though there had been a Muslim presence in the United States at least since the arrival of African slaves in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Islam's history in America truly begins with the voluntary migrations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From 1875 to 1912, Muslim migration was essentially made up of families, or individuals, fleeing economic or political hardship in their country of origin, principally in the rural areas of Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Leba-

non. These immigrants settled in mid-sized towns, finding employment in the mines and factories, or making a living as itinerant merchants.

The second wave of immigrants occurred between 1918 and 1922 and the third over the course of the 1930s. These groups were largely made up of people fleeing the economic depression and the political crises that followed World War I and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the countries of the Middle East. A fourth wave occurred after World War II, with groups coming not only from the Middle East, but also India, Pakistan, Turkey, and the Balkans. In contrast to the previous waves of immigrants, these new arrivals, better educated and more well-off than their predecessors, came primarily from the urban centers of Muslim countries. This difference in socio-economic status meant that they were better equipped, both intellectually and culturally, to resist the assimilationist forces that had made all but invisible the preceding generations of immigrants.

The fifth wave of immigration began in 1965 during the Johnson administration. In this period, the U.S. relaxed its quota policy and immigration was no longer held to a strict standard of quotas and limits by country. This easing of restrictions allowed highly qualified Muslims from Africa and Asia to enter the country in large numbers. This trend in immigration continued for several decades and in the years before September 11<sup>th</sup>, conservative estimates put the number of immigrants arriving from the Middle East and Africa at 35,000 per year. Each major crisis in the Muslim world has translated into the relocation of populations to the United States: the Six Days War of 1967, the Iranian revolution of 1979, the problems in Lebanon and Pakistan – and, more recently, the conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Despite the longstanding presence of Muslims in the United States, however, Islam's visibility in American society is a relatively recent phenomenon, a result of the religious dynamism of the two most recent waves of immigrants. The Muslim immigrants of the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a period during which the Arab-Muslim world was fighting for its independence from the West by importing the dominant Western ideologies of nationalism and socialism, were more concerned with upholding secular ideology than with promoting Islam. Since the 1970s, however,

the new arrivals, particularly those from the Indian subcontinent, have thrown themselves into religious activities of every kind: building of mosques and Madrassas, publishing religious literature and lobbying for Muslim interests. In the 1990s, the number of Islamic institutions in the U.S. was more than 2300, of which 1500 were mosques or Islamic centers. As American society undergoes a definitive and visible process of Islami-zation, a concomitant assessment of the situation of Muslim minorities in a non-Muslim society is also beginning to take shape.

This rise of Islam after 1965 encountered neither hostility, nor real surprise in American society, since from the outset it established itself within the tradition of inclusiveness towards new groups and within the framework of American civil religion. The abolition of U.S. immigration quota systems in 1965 had opened American society to a rapid influx of immigrants from all parts of the world and many of the immigrants from Asia, Africa and the Middle East were Muslims. Islam did become an object of international attention after the 1980 hostage crisis at the American Embassy in Tehran, but there was nonetheless a distinction made between Muslims in the United States and Muslims abroad, a distinction, which had a positive effect on the identity formation of the Islamic minority. Even the anti-terrorist law of 1996 did little to counteract this progress.

This dissociation of domestic and international political agendas was profoundly altered, however, by the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. From that moment on, Muslims living on American soil have been subject to surveillance and increased control as part of the “War on Terror.” The USA PATRIOT Act passed on 26 October 2001 - only six weeks after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks authorized the government to incarcerate and detain non-US citizens on the basis of mere suspicion, as long as the government had reasonable cause to believe that an individual posed a threat to national security. Security, of course, was a political concern well before 9/11, sometimes related to a broader international agenda, as in the United States’ *Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act* of 1996.<sup>5</sup>

The primary result of these new measures in the ‘international fight against terrorism’, however, is a targeting of all individuals defined as – or assumed to be – “Muslim”. In the United States, this takes the form

of increased surveillance of immigrants and visitors coming from Muslim countries, racial profiling and Department of Justice interviews and investigations of Muslims already present in the country. Nearly 1200 resident aliens of Muslim origin were arrested in the United States after 11 September 2001, largely on the basis of their ethnicity, or country of origin. Even if these practices have since tapered off somewhat, they continue to spark debate on the tension between the necessity to respect human rights and the concern for national security. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services, or CIS (formerly the Bureau of Immigration and Nationalization Services), has the power to hold and/or deport any resident alien or visitor, who overstays his or her visa. Immigration control procedures have been significantly tightened by requiring immigrants to register at immigration offices and to notify the government of any change of residence during their stay.

Immigration policies have been similarly tightened, with increased surveillance of people from Muslim countries and tougher conditions for entry. Since November 2001, the American government has enforced a twenty-day waiting period for all men between 18 and 45 arriving from Muslim countries. The new procedures for receiving foreigners into the country, in force since 5 June 2002, consist of the following provisions: the taking of photographs and digital fingerprints at passport control; regular surveillance of any foreigner in the country for a stay of less than 30 days; and greater authority on the part of the CIS to deport foreigners, whose visas have expired. These measures apply to visitors from any country designated by the United States as a supporter of terrorism, particularly Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, and Syria. Certain cases in which these measures have been applied to actual American citizens have been the subject of criticism. As of January 2003, 54,242 individuals had been registered, almost all from the Middle East or the Asian subcontinent.<sup>6</sup> One quarter of those, who register face deportation as a result of technical immigration violations, such as failure to maintain an adequate number of college credits on a student visa. The 2003 creation of the Department of Homeland Security, which combines 22 agencies and 180,000 workers from the fields of immigration and intelligence, as well

as counter-terrorism and foreign policy, has further reinforced the link between immigration and global terrorism.

The designation of 'foreign enemy', technically applicable only to those outside a country's borders, is beginning to be applied to certain targeted domestic groups, such as students or religious leaders. The fight against terrorism thus has significant consequences for Muslims living in Western countries. Not only foreign enemies, but also Muslim citizens and residents are considered possible threats and any activity relating to Islam is potentially suspect and subject to police surveillance. The primary reason for this generalized suspicion is the quasi-impossibility of differentiating between Islam as a religion and Islam as a political tool. Since the enactment of the USA PATRIOT Act, Muslim charitable organizations in the United States have also been the frequent target of police investigations.<sup>7</sup>

## The Reality of Terrorism Among American Muslims

In a December 2005 issue of *The New Republic*, Spencer Ackerman was startled by the low number of terrorists among American Muslims.<sup>8</sup> Most analysts are in agreement that, unlike their European counterparts, American Muslims tend not to be drawn to terrorist groups. Indeed, a June 2005 inquiry conducted by the *Washington Post* found that out of 400 suspects arrested on terrorist charges, only 39 could be considered at all terrorism-related and only 19 had links to Al Qaeda.<sup>9</sup> In a September 2005 talk, former White House counterterrorist expert, Richard Clarke, highlighted Al Qaeda's reliance on operatives from the indigenous population to carry out attacks in a given country. When it comes to the United States, he explained, "that indigenous population may not be here in the numbers necessary."<sup>1</sup>

There have been some American-born Muslims involved in terrorist actions, but many of these, such as the so-called "dirty bomber" Jose Padilla (an American-born convert and Al Qaeda operative intercepted

1 Quoted by Ackerman, Spencer. "Religious Protection: Why American Muslims Haven't Turned to Terrorism." *The New Republic*. Dec 12, 2005. Pg. 18.

in a suspected plot to detonate a radiological bomb in a U.S. city) and those involved in the California prison plots of 2005, were perpetrated by people with violent pasts independent of their affiliation with Islam. Padilla was a gang member in his youth and the California plotters were convicted felons, already inclined towards antisocial activities.

The risk of sleeper cells, however, should not be dismissed: a group of Jihadis familiar with the culture and language of the country may settle themselves quietly in a particular area in order to prepare an attack. Such a cell (or the beginning of a cell) was dismantled in Lackawanna, New York in September 2002. Eight men, all U.S. citizens of Yemeni descent, were found to have trained in an Al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan during the summer of 2001. This Lackawanna band, however, could not properly be called a cell, since it had no particular mission, or specifically delineated task. Most of the members were second or third generation immigrants and seen as assimilated members of the community.<sup>10</sup> What is interesting about this case is that they were ultimately rejected by the local Muslim community and denounced to the police, an indication of the lower tolerance by U.S. Muslims for any extremism in their midst. This stands in contrast to the situation in Europe, where Muslim communities tend to be more protective of religious or political extremists, largely because resentment towards and alienation from the dominant society run much higher. For instance, there are no documented examples of Muslim activists in Europe being turned in to the police by their local communities. European Muslims tend to be socio-economically marginalized in ways that American Muslims are not. They live in countries in which immigrant minorities face far higher unemployment rates than the broader population and live in segregated areas with poor quality housing. By contrast, Muslims in the United States tend to exceed the national averages in education and income levels.<sup>11</sup> This accumulation of socioeconomic and residential segregation in Europe continuously widens the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims and reinforces the perception that Muslims are under siege, thereby hindering any prospects for cooperation with the state and other dominant institutions.

An additional risk of terrorism from Muslims comes from abroad, from hit squads that enter the country with a specific mission. There have

only been two major attacks by foreign Jihadis on the United States – the first being the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the second, the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> – and a handful of smaller attacks, like the attempted 2000 Millennium bombing on the West coast and at Los Angeles airport. Besides the actual presence of individual terrorists, one measure of a community's terrorist sympathies (or lack thereof) is the level of appeal of extremist or violent viewpoints. Within the American Muslim population, the appeal of such ideas is practically nonexistent. Take the example of Azzam, an American convert to Islam associated with Al Qaeda in Pakistan, who in 2004 broadcast a video containing threats against the United States. He, along with the group of Pakistani fundamentalists he had taken up with, had been banned (in 1998) from the Islamic Society of Orange County by his imam for espousing extremism.

With the increased attention and scrutiny following September 11<sup>th</sup>, the American Muslim community has become even less tolerant of extremist ideas and much more self-conscious about the actions of their community than ever before. Calls for a reassertion of Islamic ideals of peace and justice went out throughout the community along with vehement condemnation of terrorism and violence. In fact, American Muslims are far more likely to work with authorities to fight terrorism rather than to perpetrate it. Muslims frequently work with law enforcement and counter-terrorism officials to prevent attacks, often as translators and cultural experts. For example, Sayed al-Hassan al-Qazwini, imam of the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Michigan, has acted as a facilitator between government and military officials and the Iraqi Shi'i community in the Detroit metropolitan region. Despite the risk of discrimination and civil rights abuses, which are of serious concern to American Muslims, 84 % are in favor of tough laws to combat terrorism, according to a 2001 Georgetown/Zogby poll, taken after September 11<sup>th</sup>.<sup>12</sup>

The most reported reasons for the absence of American Muslims in the global Jihad are social and economic. According a 2001 Georgetown/Zogby MAPS poll, 58 % of Muslims have a college degree and 50 % have an income above \$50,000 per year, as compared with 25 % and 33 % of the general American public.<sup>13</sup> Because of such prosperity, terrorist acts by American Muslims are much less likely to be inspired by socio-eco-

conomic desperation, such as lack of employment opportunities, or poor living conditions, as is the case in Europe.

However, this theory of a direct link between social deprivation and violent frustration has been repeatedly and successfully challenged. For instance, Marc Sageman has documented that most terrorists are indeed part of the middle class and have received higher educations.<sup>14</sup> Evidence for a direct correlation between social deprivation and a terrorist violence has not been forthcoming and remains pending. The socio-economic argument cannot, therefore, fully explain the receptivity (or lack thereof) of the Muslim diaspora to terrorism. It would appear that there are three main factors in the potential attraction to militant forms of Jihad: the preeminence of Salafi<sup>15</sup> doctrine in the West, the cultural marginalization of certain Muslim immigrant populations and the growing discrimination against Muslims and Islam as a religion.

A fourth factor worth mentioning is the influence of political violence in the country of origin of some Muslim immigrants. For example, US officials stated that a number of second generation Somali immigrants are becoming increasingly radicalized and could pose a threat to security. The warnings come amid the revelation that 20 young American Somali men, who returned to their war-torn homeland, have been radicalized by a group linked to Al Qaeda. Authorities began looking into the radicalization of Somali youths after a 27 year old Minnesota citizen blew himself up in one of five coordinated bombings in northern Somalia, organized by al-Shabaab. According to the reports, these young men are motivated by a strong sense of nationalism to defend their homeland – a sentiment that grew after an invasion by forces from neighboring Ethiopia<sup>2</sup>

## Dominance of the Salafi Interpretation of Islam

According to much research, Salafi doctrine, although it does not directly encourage terrorism, does provide a religious framework similar to the one used by radical groups, such as Al Qaeda and therefore contributes

2 Agence-France Presse [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i4y1xs-BNNbkc\\_VSEEdFCuNd6UsPw](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i4y1xs-BNNbkc_VSEEdFCuNd6UsPw)

to create the sense of familiarity, or proximity that terrorists experience upon joining radical groups. Although Salafi is not the only interpretation of Islam available in America, it has indeed become central to the way that Muslims understand their religious tradition in the West. In the US, most of the materials provided to teach, or learn about Islam follow the Salafi interpretation.<sup>16</sup>

What is this intellectual framework or interpretation? Broadly speaking, it is a literalist interpretation of Islam based solely on the Koran and *Hadith*<sup>17</sup> originating in the Wahhabi<sup>18</sup> doctrine. This interpretation of the Islamic tradition emerged in the eighteenth century in the Arabian Peninsula with the teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abdel Wahab (1703-1792), whose literalist interpretations of the Koran became the official doctrine of the Saudi Kingdom upon its creation in 1924.<sup>19</sup> It is characterized by an extreme hostility to any kind of intellectualized criticism of tradition. Mystical approaches and historical interpretations alike are held in contempt. Orthodox practice can be defined as a direct relation to the revealed Text, with no recourse to the historical contributions of the various juridical schools (*madhab*). In the literalist interpretation of Islam, nothing must come between the believer and the Text. Customs, culture and *Sufism* (Islamic mysticism) must all be done away with in favor of a literal interpretation.

The atmosphere of intense competition between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan for leadership of the Muslim world has also led Europe and the United States to become a crucial battleground – as evidenced by the sharp increase in petrodollars distributed in the West during the last two decades. The proliferation of brochures, free Korans and the building of new Islamic centers and mosques and the increase in the number of Internet sites all serve to facilitate access to Wahhabi and Salafi teachings and to promote Wahhabism as the sole legitimate guardian of Islamic thought.

It is extremely difficult to gauge the precise influence exerted by Wahhabism on Muslim religious practice. In the case of American Muslims, the influence cannot simply be measured by statistics. According to a 2003 survey conducted by the Detroit Mosque, the Salafi interpretation of Islam, the literalist basis for fundamentalist groups around the world, was followed by only 8% of mosque attendees and by virtually no mosque

leaders. However, in a minority culture – which lacks both institutions for religious education and the means by which to produce new forms of knowledge – the easy access to theology that Salafism offers is one of the main reasons for its popularity. The widespread diffusion of Salafi teachings means that even non-Salafi Muslims evaluate their Islamic practice by Wahhabi standards. In other words, even if most Muslims do not follow Wahhabi dress codes – white tunic, head covering, beards for men, *nikab* for women – the orthodox Salafi nonetheless often becomes the standard image of what a good Muslim ought to be.

These trends within Islam point to the emergence of fundamentalism as a global phenomenon. Global fundamentalism is defined, above all, by an exclusive and hierarchical vision of the world and by a taxonomy of religions with Islam at the top. The expanded use of the term *kafir* (infidel, heretic), for example, is very common among Wahhabis. In classical Islamic tradition, this term is used only for polytheists, not for members of competing monotheistic faiths. In globalized fundamentalist groups, however, it has been extended to include Jews, Christians and sometimes even non-practicing Muslims. Thus, for those influenced by Wahhabism, the world is divided into Muslims and infidels and the image of the West – automatically associated with moral depravity – is always a negative one: nothing good can come from the West, neither politics nor morality nor culture. The Wahhabist perception of the West is as essentialist in nature as its interpretation of the Islamic tradition. Not surprisingly, Wahhabist or Salafist teaching also discourages political participation, holding that the believer must maintain a separatist stance in relation to public institutions.

These versions of Islam do indeed contain similarities with *Jihadi* discourse, even using the same vocabulary, especially when talking about the West and often the same religious terminology. This fact may explain why many young people sense a connection between Wahhabism and Jihadism. One must not assume, however, that all Wahhabis eventually become Jihadis. Other factors, such as the levels of political socialization and education among young Muslims, are just as decisive in the attraction to radical groups.

## Weakness or Absence of Adequate Social Networks

In addition to the spread of an essentialized Islamic tradition, the social status of young Muslims is a decisive factor in explaining their potential attraction to radical groups. An apparent prerequisite to engagement in radical groups is a “disembeddedness” from society: that is, a condition in which an individual, or group, lacks strong social affiliations and networks. According to Sageman’s findings, the absence of social networks and the atomisation of individuals seems to be a precondition for involvement in destructive mass movements, a theory which recalls attempts in the 1950s to explain the attraction of large scale radicalism.

One cause of the feeling of disembeddedness is no doubt related to the conditions of life in major, globalized, international cities in the West. The “global city” is the primary environment for the installation and adaptation of Muslim immigrants within their new national and social contexts. Large metropolises like New York, Los Angeles or Chicago are now centers of the Muslim world by virtue of the large concentrations of immigrant Muslims they host. For many inhabitants of these multicultural cities, however, constant contact with other cultures does not necessarily make them cosmopolitan. This is especially the case with the western branches of the Taliban, who, transnational though they may be, are very far from being cosmopolitan. For them, taking up arms against the West expresses the rejection of what is close, familiar and at the same time, inaccessible. Their immersion in Western culture only reinforces their need to preserve the purity of Islam and to limit their interactions with the surrounding environment. Thus, while these young Muslims are undoubtedly transnational and internationally mobile, they are by no means cosmopolitan.

The feeling of being out-of-place or displaced is shared among recent immigrants and recent converts to Islam. Western Jihadis are usually apprentices to, or novices, in Islam. Thus, whether because they have converted to Islam from a non-Islamic background, or because their family’s emigration disrupted the normal transmission of tradition, these Jihadis’ education in Islam begins, not with the family, but with the

fundamentalist groups of the Tabligh or the Salafi. They turn to radical ideology both in rejection of Western decadence and in redress of their own cultural rootlessness.

The temporary loss of embeddedness makes certain young people, in particular, gravitate towards Salafi leaders and the nexus of spiritual and social ties found within fundamentalist groups. Salafi groups provide networks and can often facilitate social affiliation with Jihad through bonds of friendship. The decision to become an active participant within Jihadi movements often hinges on a familiarity with other participants, who hold the role of friends. In other words, becoming a *mujahid* involves gaining membership in this or that particular clique. A clique, in this case, is a dense and small network of friends, who can vouch for each other and provide support. In a clique, every individual unit is connected to every other. According to Sageman, "Cliques are often built on human similarities. Friendships reflect common background, education and beliefs, but the dense network that members of a clique form are local and based on face to face encounters, attraction and development of long-term bonds."<sup>20</sup> A clique, however, is not a social movement and in any global Salafi Jihadi movement there are many different forms of cliques. A clique is like an enclave of like-minded people, prone to the polarization of visions, views and interpretations of the world. In this regard, the Salafi doctrine provides an intellectual framework to the clique by legitimating a binary vision of the world that can then be implemented in violent Jihadi action.

## **Reinforcement of the Clique by the Post-9/11 Perception of Islam and Muslims among Westerners**

The post-9/11 condition of Muslims in America is characterized by an increasing distrust towards the West by Muslims. This distrust is fuelled by security policies that they very often consider as discriminatory towards Islam as a religion. The current social climate has also resulted in a growing sense of alienation among some segments of the American Muslim population. A number of factors have contributed to an atmosphere in which

Muslims do not feel they truly belong to, or that they are accepted as, full members of American society. These include widespread anti-Muslim sentiments; negative stereotypes in the media; discrimination in various arenas of society, such as employment; biased remarks by political leaders; and counter-terrorism legislation disproportionately affecting Muslims.

The more discrimination and social exclusion members of a particular minority face, the more they tend to unite around the perceived cause of their discrimination, such as their religious affiliation. Such a phenomenon can indeed be a factor in strengthening a defensive identification with Islam. Nevertheless, this alone is not sufficient to explain involvement in radical groups. Discrimination must thus be considered as interactive with the other conditions discussed above in this paper.

## Conclusion

To fully comprehend the reasons for the attraction toward radical groups, the following dynamic appears key: the absence of adequate social networks and a feeling of personal alienation, intensified by a sense of collective discrimination from the dominant society. Currently, for example, American society appears to be less discriminatory than European societies. In Europe, Muslims are not just any kind of immigrants: their presence results from colonial relationships between European societies and parts of the Muslim world.<sup>21</sup> Such a history based on cultural and political domination shapes not only the perceptions that contemporary Muslim groups hold, but also the discourses that they engage in.<sup>22</sup> In the U.S., by contrast, Muslim immigration is not the product of a colonial past, but rather follows the process of standard migration. Thus, Muslims tend to adopt the views of the majority of all immigrants in terms of their perceptions and opinions of American society. In other words, they still partake in the American dream even after 9/11.

In addition to discrimination based on their immigrant status, there is a second factor that causes Muslims to feel alienated by the dominant society in Europe: the status of religion in civil society. Secularization means that political power is defined by its neutral interactions with

religious institutions. We should remember that, with the exception of France, this principle of neutrality is not, in Europe, synonymous with separation of church and state. In fact, it is realized within a range of institutional structures, from a state religion or a concordat to strict separation. The institutional agreements between Islamic organizations and the secular state are only one aspect of the status of religions within Europe and the United States. Beyond the differentiation of the political and religious spheres and the notion of neutrality lies an ideological meaning of secularization, the origins of which lie with the philosophy of the Enlightenment. A common denominator among Western European countries is their tendency to consider that the sacred is misplaced and illegitimate within the civic context. The idea that religion cannot play a role in the general well-being of societies – a mark of the secularized mind – is, in fact, common throughout all of Europe, despite differences among the national contracts between states and organized religions.<sup>23</sup> The consequence of invalidating the religious is that the various manifestations of Islam in Europe have become troublesome, or even unacceptable in the eyes of the dominant culture. The hijab controversy, the Jyllands-Posten cartoons crisis and the Rushdie affair shed light on the tension between Islamic claims and European conceptions of secularism. Meanwhile, even though tensions certainly do exist in the U.S. and conflicts do occur, American Muslims have not experienced such intense, controversial crises.

However, the increasing suspicion directed against American Muslims may prove to be a risk to the present relative accord that exists between American Muslims and mainstream U.S. society. One poll has shown that nearly half of Americans are willing to restrict the civil rights of Muslims in the name of security.<sup>24</sup> Other polls, however, have shown fairly tolerant attitudes towards Muslims and diversity in general, at least on an interpersonal level.<sup>25</sup> Muslim understanding of American attitudes reflects this mixed picture. More than three quarters of Muslims polled by Zogby in November 2001 considered Americans respectful and tolerant of Muslims.<sup>26</sup> Among immigrants, this view was held by nearly 80% of the Muslims polled.<sup>27</sup> However, almost half of those, who were of the opinion that Americans were respectful and tolerant also felt that

American society overall was disrespectful and intolerant.<sup>28</sup> In an open-ended question asked during a discussion about politics, nearly three quarters identified anti-Muslim bias as the most pressing issue for the Muslim community.<sup>29</sup> Such suspicion can lead to feelings of resentment and alienation and thus make American Muslims more susceptible to the messages of Jihadi doctrine.

In conclusion, certain political changes, however, could counter this increasing suspicion. Some examples are:

- Putting an end to the “ghettoization” of Islam – treating Islam and Muslims separately from other religions – in political discourse and policy-making.
- Opening a multilateral dialogue about all religions, not only about Islam as an exceptional case, especially when questions of secularism and religious freedom are at stake.
- Providing opportunities for non-religious education about Islam in public schools, thus exponentially increasing the avenues of learning about Islam in various historical and cultural contexts at a young age. For example, the state of California has taken the lead in reworking the descriptions of Islam found in its history textbooks.
- More work needs to be done to include Islam in mainstream American public space and collective memory, as has been done for other religious groups, such as Jews and Catholics.
- Creating the right academic conditions for critical Islamic studies, similar to critical Biblical studies and increasing the recruitment of Muslim scholars in the social sciences and the humanities.

Because the state maintains control over Islamic Studies in most Muslim countries, the Western Academy has become a major locus for the development of critical thinking and approaches to the Qur’an and the Islamic tradition, as pioneered in the work of Abdolkarim Soroush, Khaled Abou El Fadl and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im.<sup>30</sup>

## Notes

- 1 After September 11<sup>th</sup>, the question of population statistics became a contentious issue. In October of 2001, a scholar at the University of Chicago published his independent findings indicating that only 1% of the population in the United States (i.e., 1.9-2.8 million people) was Muslim. (Tom W. Smith, *Estimating The Muslim Population in the United States* [New York: The American Jewish Committee, October 2001.]) Another study conducted by the American Religious Identification Survey, published in 2001, similarly estimated the number of American Muslims at 1.8 million.) In the tense climate that existed after September 11<sup>th</sup>, these findings were the subject of much public debate and polemic. The debate reached its peak after they were republished by the American Jewish Committee, a Jewish lobbying group, which was subsequently accused of attempting to minimize the importance of Islam in America. From there, a battle of numbers began between the representatives of several prominent American Jewish and Muslim organizations. The figure of 6 or 7 million is based on a number of additional considerations, including statistics on immigration from countries considered Muslim by definition, as well as statistics on the membership of existent Islamic centers. The problem with this reasoning is that many immigrants from Muslim countries are actually Christians, particularly those from the Arab world. In fact, the majority of the Arab-American community is Christian. Moreover, statistics acquired from Islamic centers are highly imprecise, since they count not only members, but all those “associated” with the centers in question. See Ihsan Bagby, P.M. Perl and B.T. Froehle, *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait* (Washington, D.C.: Council on American Islamic Relations [CAIR], 2001). One other statistical approach is to ask questions about ancestry. This method puts the number of Muslims in the United States at 4 million. See also: Ba-Yunus, Ilyas and M.M. Siddiqui, *A Report on the Muslim Population in the United States*, Richmond Hills: CAMRI, 1998.
- 2 Nick Galifianikis, “U.S. Muslim Population Grows.” *Rockland Journal News*, 10 February 1994.
- 3 Galifianikis, “U.S. Muslim Population Grows.”
- 4 Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet, Muslims in Europe and in the United States*, (New Palgrave, 2006 (second edition)).
- 5 The text of the Act is available at <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/s735.htm>
- 6 Karen Tumlin, “Suspect First: How Terrorism Policy is Reshaping Immigration Policy.” 2004: 1173.
- 7 On 4 December 2001, the government designated The Holy Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) as a terrorist organization and froze its assets, alleging that the foundation had ties to Hamas, a terrorist organization according to US diplomatic regulations. The Global Relief Foundation (GRF) and the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF) were also penalized financially. More than 50,000 people were affected by the shutting-down of these three organizations. The assets of a fourth US-based charity - the Islamic American Relief Agency, in Columbia, Missouri - were frozen in mid-October 2004, just at the beginning of Ramadan. The following week (19 October), a request from several Muslim groups for the US government to provide a list of ‘approved’ organizations for charitable giving was denied. US officials claimed that such a request was not feasible, since new information

- could come to light at any time. Jane Lampman, "US Muslims in a quandary over charities." *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 November 2004.
- 8 "Religious Protection: Why American Muslims Haven't Turned to Terrorism." *The New Republic*, 12 December 2005.
  - 9 Dan Eggen and Julie Tate. "U.S. Campaign Produces Few Convictions on Terrorism Charges." *Washington Post*, 12 June 2005.
  - 10 Jake Tapper. "Sleeper cell—of foolish pawns?", 19 May 2003.  
[http://archive.salon.com/news/feature/2003/05/19/buffalo\\_6/index\\_np.html](http://archive.salon.com/news/feature/2003/05/19/buffalo_6/index_np.html)
  - 11 Jocelyne Cesari, *Secularization and Religious Divides in Europe: Islamophobia in Western Europe*. 1 June 2006, p. 16-18.
  - 12 Project MAPS. "American Muslim Poll 2001." p. 28.
  - 13 Project MAPS. "American Muslim Poll 2001." p. 7.
  - 14 Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, (Pennsylvania University Press, 2005).
  - 15 In the Islamic tradition, *Salaf* refers to the devout elders, who served as companions to the Prophet Mohammed. In contemporary Islam, the term refers to groups or movements that go back to the Koran. The *Salafyya* was initially a modernist movement created in the nineteenth century by Islamic scholars, such as Mohammed Abduh, Al-Afghani and Rashid Rida. They certainly promoted a return to the Revealed Text and the *Hadith*, (the words and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed), but they were not by any means anti-intellectual and were, in their time, even considered modernists. Today the term *Salafi* has become closely associated with more conservative and anti-modernist interpretations of the Koran and *Hadith*.
  - 16 For more on Salafi doctrine and Islamic thought in the West, see Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet*.
  - 17 The *Hadith* is a collection of narratives describing the Prophet Muhammad's actions and teachings. Muslim scholars in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries determined, which narratives were authentic and authoritative.
  - 18 *Wahhabism* is a Sunni reform movement originally founded in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab. He advocated a strict interpretation of the Koran and *Sunna*—the customs of the Prophet Mohammed – that saw only the early teachings of Islam as legitimate. He also called for a purer implementation of *Shariah*, or Islamic law. Arguably, Wahhabism taught that killing non-believers was justified to spread Wahhabism, including even Muslims, who did not follow its teachings in the category of non-believers. The term *Wahhabi* is a controversial term within the Muslim community and is sometimes seen as an insult. Today most Wahhabis, followers of Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab's teachings, live in Saudi Arabia. The Saud tribe has a long-standing alliance with Wahhabi leaders, but the relationship has experienced tensions as Saudi Arabia becomes an increasingly modern state.
  - 19 See Natana J. Delong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Khaled Abou El Fadl. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (Harper San Francisco, 2005).
  - 20 *Understanding Terror Networks*, chapter 5.
  - 21 This is true even in Germany, which has never been a colonial power. Germany's relationships with the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey may explain the dominant presence of Turks in Germany's immigrant Muslim population.
  - 22 See Cesari, *Secularization and Religious Divides in Europe: Islamophobia in Western Europe* (2006).
  - 23 It is important to note here that there do exist non-Muslim religious groups, who question certain tenets of mainstream secularism. Germany, for example, has seen some debate over Christian values in the public sphere, while the display of the crucifix in the classroom has

- sparked controversy in Italy. However, the main strands of public culture in the political, media and intellectual spheres are highly secularized and tend to ignore religious dimensions and references that are still meaningful to some segments of society.
- 24 “Fear Factor: 44 Percent of Americans Queried in Cornell National Poll Favor Curtailing Some Liberties for Muslim Americans.” *Cornell News*, 17 December 2004.
  - 25 See the series of polls conducted by the Pew Center, <http://pewforum.org/docs/index.php?DocID=26>
  - 26 Project MAPS. “American Muslim Poll 2001.” p. 27.
  - 27 Project MAPS. “American Muslim Poll 2001.” p. 27.
  - 28 Project MAPS. “American Muslim Poll 2001.” p. 27.
  - 29 Project MAPS. “American Muslim Poll 2001.” p. 16.
  - 30 Abdolkarim Soroush was born in Tehran in 1945. After receiving a pharmacy degree in Iran, he attended graduate school in London. After the Revolution, Khomeini appointed Soroush to the Cultural Revolution Institute, responsible for restructuring the Iranian university system. He gradually became “more critical of the political role played by the Iranian clergy,” and since the 1990s has produced widely circulated articles and audio tapes on religious pluralism, hermeneutics, politics and literature. He has served as visiting professor at Harvard, Yale and Princeton (<http://www.dr.soroush.com/Biography-E.htm>).  
Khaled Abou El Fadl was born in Kuwait in 1963. He has been a professor of law at the UCLA School of Law since 1998. He holds degrees from Yale, University of Pennsylvania and Princeton and received traditional training in Islamic jurisprudence in Egypt and Kuwait. His courses cover Islamic law, immigration law, human rights and terrorism. Professor Abou El Fadl has done work with Human Rights Watch and was appointed by President George W. Bush to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. (<http://www.law.ucla.edu/home/index.asp?page=386>)  
Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im is from Sudan. A “scholar of Islam and human rights and human rights in cross-cultural perspectives,” An-Na’im is Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law at Emory Law School. He was formerly the Executive Director of the African bureau of Human Rights Watch. (<http://www.law.emory.edu/cms/site/index.php?id=1268>)

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# African Diasporas, Diasporas in Africa, and Terrorist Threats

*Ken Menkhaus*

## Introduction

The link between sub-Saharan Africa's diaspora and terrorist activities defies conventional wisdom. The continent has produced a large and growing diaspora concentrated in Europe, North America and the Gulf States. African diaspora members in Europe and North America are mixed in their socio-economic status – some are educated and middle class, but many others are poor, unemployed, illegal, marginalized, easily abused, concentrated in immigrant ghettos and frequently the targets of racism and discrimination in their daily lives. For this latter category, life in their newly adopted host countries is often far harder than they imagined. A significant portion of the African diaspora members in Europe and North America are Muslim. The vast majority of African Muslims in the diaspora were brought up in the Sufi tradition, encountering radical, Salafist preaching for the first time only when arriving in the Gulf states or the West. This combination of alienation, marginalization, exposure to radical new interpretations of Islam and the promise of belonging that al Qaeda cells offer to recruits is a potentially lethal cocktail. Collectively, the Muslim portion of the African diaspora in the West fits the general profile of a community at risk of recruitment into Jihadist cells.

Yet sub-Saharan Africa's large Muslim diaspora has to date produced few terrorist recruits, neither as leaders, nor as foot-soldiers. African diaspora involvement in al Qaeda is nowhere near the level generated by the diaspora originating from North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. One major exception – the botched London subway bombing plot

on July 21, 2005, implicating several young men of Eritrean, Ethiopian and Somali origin – was an amateurish aberration, with no real links to al Qaeda.<sup>1</sup> A second case – the recruitment of tens of young Somali diaspora members from Minneapolis, USA, to join the Shabaab Jihadist group in Somalia, where one of the diaspora served as a suicide bomber in a series of terrorist attacks inside Somalia on October 2008 – is much more serious and demands close attention. Is the Minneapolis case an aberration, or the first indication of a new trend toward greater recruitment of Africans into terrorist networks? While this is mainly a matter of conjecture, available evidence explored in this study suggests that the Minneapolis case is the exception that proves the rule.

Sub-Saharan African “exceptionalism” is especially intriguing in light of the fact that the African Muslim diaspora in the West suffers from the same conditions, which are conventionally cited to explain the rise of radicalism and terrorist activities among other Muslim diasporas in the West. “We have social exclusion, we have a sense of not-belonging, a sense of alienation. We have alien ideas, frustration, humiliation,” notes Dr. Daud Abdullah of the Muslim Council of Britain. “When you add the international dimension to this, all of these factors feed into the mindset of our youth and it’s demonstrating itself in this outrageous behaviour.”<sup>2</sup> Why is this explanation so plausible and self-evident in explaining the rise of terrorist cells among the North African, Middle Eastern and South Asian diaspora in Europe, but so inadequate with regard to the sub-Saharan African Muslim diaspora?

Advancing this African exceptionalism thesis is not to say that sub-Saharan Africa diaspora members are uninvolved in activities, which could be construed as terrorist. African diaspora members have been much more likely to provide financial or political backing to ethnically-based insurgencies, which are considered terrorist organizations in their home countries, a pattern, which serves to reinforce the general observation that Africa’s most lethal terrorist movements have not been Islamic Jihadists but rather pathological insurgencies, such as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone or the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) of northern Uganda. The fact that the African diaspora has been more

inclined to fund and support terrorist activities linked to local rather than global agendas is a potential clue explored below.

It is also the case that the diaspora has increasingly come to play a direct role in political leadership in government, opposition and armed insurgencies in Africa, so that virtually any political movement in Africa – whether terrorist or not – has a significant diaspora component. The increased movement of African elites between the continent and the West and the growing practice of holding multiple passports as a matter of risk management, is making the line between Africans and the African diaspora increasingly hard to draw. When an armed insurgency in Africa, which draws on direct and indirect diaspora support is suddenly designated a terrorist organization in the US – as was the case with the Somali group al-Shabaab, so designated in March 2008 – an entire population in the diaspora is at risk of being accused of terrorist activities.

Finally, recent developments in Somalia serve as a reminder that though the African diaspora has to date been an inconsequential player in Islamic terrorism, that pattern could change in the future. Under the right circumstances, African Muslims in the diaspora can be recruited into Jihadi cells. This concern has been underscored since 2006 within the Somali diaspora. The many Somali diaspora members, who returned to Somalia in 2006 to play a role in the leadership, or in the armed militia of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) were motivated by a complex mixture of nationalist, anti-Ethiopian and Islamist ideologies and cannot be linked in any way with terrorism. A small number of those diaspora members, however, were indoctrinated and trained in the Jihadist *Shabaab* militia and became a potential threat both in East Africa and in their adopted homelands.<sup>3</sup> This fear has been amplified in the wake of revelations in late 2008 that a Somali-American served as a suicide bomber in a terrorist attack in Somalia.

This chapter examines the relationship between Africa's diverse diasporas and terrorist activities emanating from that group. It argues that only by breaking down the African diaspora into discrete categories – by geographic origin, sectarian identity, host country, class, generation and cause – can interesting patterns and trends be uncovered.<sup>4</sup> It considers patterns in the African diaspora in the West separately from the African

diaspora working and studying in the Gulf states and considers an often overlooked but increasingly important category of the African diaspora – African migrants and immigrants in other African states – as a group of concern. It also considers the extent to which non-African diasporas operate on the African continent in terrorist activities, arguing that to date sub-Saharan Africa's main role in terrorism has been as a permissive operating environment for terrorists from other regions of the world. The case study of the Somali diaspora's involvement with al-Shabaab is given special attention for clues as to what circumstances might draw African diaspora into terrorist activities. It draws on existing published studies, publicly available primary documents from international organizations and the US government and the author's fieldwork in East Africa over the past two decades.

## Background

It is increasingly difficult to assess almost any socio-political phenomenon in Africa without placing the diaspora at, or near the center of analysis. Over the past three decades, millions of Africans have secured residency rights abroad, mainly in the West; many millions more live abroad illegally. That diaspora is playing an increasingly powerful role in the political and economic life of their home country.

The largest portion of the “extra-continental” African diaspora is concentrated in the West – Western Europe, Canada, and the United States. With the important exception of North Africans – a distinct category discussed below – African diaspora involvement in Jihadist terrorist activities in Europe and North America is quite low. Sub-Saharan African Muslims do not figure prominently in leadership levels in the al Qaeda network, or in known al Qaeda cells in the West. Only modest numbers of Sub-Saharan African Muslims based in the West joined the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan and even fewer have made their way to Iraq to fight in the insurgency there. And with the exception of the failed 21 July 2005 plot in London (discussed below), sub-Saharan African Muslims

in the diaspora have to date played virtually no role in terrorist attacks in Europe and the US.

The pace of out-migration from Africa to the West has accelerated since the late 1960s. Only about 27,000 Africans emigrated to the West between 1960 and 1975.<sup>5</sup> The flow is now estimated by the World Bank to reach 70,000 or more per year.<sup>6</sup> The total number of Africans in the diaspora outside the continent is now estimated at roughly 10 million, though precise numbers are very difficult to come by for a variety of reasons.<sup>7</sup> The Economic Commission for Africa estimates that five million Africans currently live in OECD countries.<sup>8</sup> The US Census Bureau estimated in 2002 that just over one million African immigrants resided in the United States alone; of that group, 37% hailed from West Africa (Nigeria being the largest source, with 135,000 immigrants), 24% were East African (of which Ethiopia is the largest single source) and 21% were North African (with Egypt the largest contributor).<sup>9</sup> Some arrived as part of large waves of refugees fleeing Africa's multiple civil wars, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Others arrived to the West, or the Gulf states as part of the sustained flow of migrant laborers and students seeking educational opportunities, or better employment abroad.

The number of Africans migrating within Africa is far greater than those, who have migrated outside the continent. If one includes as part of the African diaspora the many million of Africans, who have migrated within the continent, the total number of African diaspora members shoots up dramatically. According the 2006 Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on International Migration and Development, Africa hosts 9% of the world's 191 million migrants, or roughly 17 million migrants, nearly all of which are Africans.<sup>10</sup>

The flow of emigrants has impacted African states unevenly. A number of African states have arguably been transformed into "diasporic nation-states," in which the home economy is dependent on remittances from abroad as its main source of hard currency and the top political, social and private sector leadership of the country is derived from the diaspora. African countries, such as Eritrea, have exported up to twenty-five percent of their total population abroad. Remittances from Somalia's one million diaspora members (of a total of nine million citizens) constitutes by far the

most important source of hard currency (estimated at \$500-\$800 million annually, compared to \$100 million in livestock exports) and is the major source of business and real estate investments.<sup>11</sup> Africa as a whole receives an estimated \$14 billion annually in remittances from its diaspora – a figure which is likely to decline in the wake of the worldwide economic crisis since 2008.<sup>12</sup> Across the continent, a growing percentage of leaders in politics, business and civil society hold passports in other countries, usually in Europe, North America, or regional commercial hubs in the Gulf, such as the United Arab Emirates. Most of the continent's armed insurgencies – whether considered liberation movements or terrorist groups – are based abroad and are financed and led by diaspora members. Thanks to improved telecommunications, transport and financial technology, African diaspora members are much better able to maintain close involvement in affairs in their home country. As elsewhere around the world, this heightened level of diaspora engagement in their country of origin can be a force both for good and for ill.<sup>13</sup>

Africa's diaspora members figure prominently in efforts at post-conflict political arrangements; many top figures in governments of national unity from DRC to Burundi to Somalia are returnees from years as refugees abroad. While many bring back to their country of origin valuable professional skills, their return to the political scene is not always welcome. Tensions between those, who lived through the wars and those, who “sat it out” in foreign countries are compounded by competition over power and employment between the two groups.

Because so many African countries have experienced protracted armed conflicts, a substantial portion of the African diaspora consists of refugees, who have resettled in third countries. As with all war-generated diasporas, this category can produce passionate political sentiments, either in pursuit of peace and reconciliation, or in support of one side in an ongoing conflicts. Extremist, or at least uncompromising, political positions are easier for the diaspora to take, because they do not have to live with the consequences of their intransigence. But the vast majority of extremist diaspora members from Africa embrace ethnically based movements, not Islamic radicalism.

Another important category of African diaspora members are the mainly young men, who are sent abroad by their families, or who voluntarily migrate in hopes of securing jobs as migrant laborers in Europe. This group endures severe hardships and considerable risk to reach Europe, usually via North Africa, or by boat from West Africa to the Canary Islands and has been the subject of extensive policy debates in Europe over “what to do” about the tide of migrants from Africa.

A final category of importance is the large intra-continental African diaspora – the combination of migrants, immigrants and refugees, who settle, legally or illegally, in neighboring countries. This group numbers in the millions and can be the source of sharp political conflicts over land, citizenship rights and employment in countries, such as Cote d’Ivoire and South Africa. Several of Africa’s most prominent al Qaeda operatives come from this group.

## The African Diaspora in the West

While many of Africa’s recent migrants into Europe are poor and poorly educated, the general profile of the African diaspora is disproportionately professional. Studies of African immigrants in Europe and North America have found that as a group, they possess higher level of education than does the native-born population.<sup>14</sup> This has created a serious “brain-drain” crisis in some African countries, which have witnessed a large percentage of their professionals in medicine, engineering and other fields leave for higher paying jobs abroad.

In many instances, African political, social and business elites secure travel and residency documents in second countries as a simple matter of risk management. This is especially true in Africa’s many conflict and post-conflict settings, where risks stemming from political reversals and general criminality are exceptionally high. This category of the African diaspora is nominal, in that the foreign passports are more a form of insurance than a choice to start a new life abroad. A related form of “incidental diasporas” are those business and social leaders, who secure a foreign passport to facilitate travel abroad, those who “park” their fami-

lies in countries with better public safety, educational facilities, or social welfare and those whose work requires that they live for many months of the year in places like Dubai or London.

Care must be taken in comparing the sub-Saharan African diasporic experience in the United States and Europe. Whereas the large African and North African Muslim diaspora in Europe forms a core part of a poor ethnic underclass concentrated in ghettos, the African Muslim diaspora in the United States tends to enjoy greater levels of social and economic mobility, whether they arrive as privileged elite, or not. Indeed, first and second generation Muslims in the US – a group which constitutes about 70% of the six million Muslims in America – are relatively affluent and well-educated as a group, a factor which adds to the challenge of forging closer relations with the 1.5 million Muslim African-Americans, whose social and economic history and status tends to diverge sharply from that of the Muslim immigrants.<sup>15</sup> Second-generation African immigrants (children of immigrants) in the US, including both Muslim and non-Muslim African-Americans, appear to enjoy better prospects for social integration and for economic and educational success than in Europe.

The first incident involving sub-Saharan African diaspora members in a terrorist plot in the West occurred on 21 July 2005, when a group of six young, Muslim, African immigrants in the UK made what was first believed to be an amateurish attempt to copy the 7 July London underground terrorist bombings. Subsequent evidence revealed that the group had begun planning the bombing plot months before the 7 July attacks, throwing into question the claim that they were little more than copycats. The group of six included a few, who were described locally as “social misfits;” at least one with a background in chemistry and a capacity to assemble home-made bombs and one, who allegedly received terrorist training in Sudan and Pakistan in 2003 and 2004.<sup>16</sup> Several attended sermons by the convicted radical preacher Abu Hamza.<sup>17</sup> In a public statement after his arrest, one of the suspects insisted the plot was merely a hoax to frighten people and was motivated by their anger over British involvement in the Iraq intervention. “We made some false, fake explosives to frighten people, to stop them, because of the [Iraq] war, basically,” claimed Hussein Osman, an Eritrean diaspora member.<sup>18</sup> The

home made bombs, made of hydrogen peroxide, flour, other chemicals, and nails, failed to explode though the detonators went off; the failure was apparently due to improper construction of the bombs.<sup>19</sup>

Publicly available evidence in this case has revealed no link between the 21 July cell and the 7 July terrorist attack, which was carried out by the “Luton cell” comprised mainly of south Asians. Unlike the Luton cell, which appears to have close and direct ties to al Qaeda, the link between the 21 July plotters and a broader terror network is thin. While the 21 July plot serves as a sobering reminder that terror attacks can emanate unpredictably from small circles of angry, disaffected youth, it does not provide much evidence to suggest a growing role of the sub-Saharan African Muslim diaspora in organized, al Qaeda affiliated terror networks.

## The Minneapolis-Al Shabaab Case

By far the most serious incidence of African Muslim recruitment into a terrorist network occurred in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 2007 and 2008. There, a dozen or more Somali-American males ranging in age from 19 to 30 were recruited into the Somali Jihadist group al-Shabaab. They suddenly went missing, reappearing in Somalia, where they were allegedly indoctrinated and trained by al-Shabaab and kept isolated from the outside world. One, Shirwa Ahmed, served as a suicide bomber in a Shabaab terrorist attack in Hargeisa, Somaliland, in October 2008. According to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Ahmed was the first American citizen to commit an act of terror for an al-Qaeda affiliated group. The case of the missing Somali-Americans in Minneapolis subsequently produced considerable publicity, increased US law enforcement attention to Somali immigrant communities and Congressional investigations.

The Minneapolis case of Shirwa Ahmed and other youth, who have been recruited into Shabaab raises a basic question – why would Shabaab actively recruit diaspora members? What can a diaspora recruit do that a local militia fighter cannot?<sup>20</sup> First, it is clear that the diaspora are not of much value as rank and file militia for the Shabaab, or any other fighting force in Somalia. Somalia is already saturated with experienced teenage

gunmen and has no need to import more. In fact, evidence from the ICU in 2006 suggests that the Somali diaspora, as well as foreign fighters were as much a liability as an asset to the ICU. They were unfamiliar with the countryside, often spoke the Somali language poorly, were more likely to become sick, and required a fair amount of oversight.

But the diaspora are useful to Shabaab and other armed groups in Somalia in other ways. Their familiarity with computers and the Internet is a valuable communication skill. And a young diaspora recruit is, upon arrival in Somalia, entirely cut off socially and therefore in theory easier to isolate, indoctrinate, and control for the purpose of executing suicide bombings. Were this not the case, it would be much less risky and expensive for Shabaab to simply recruit locals.

A Somali diaspora member groomed to be a terrorist is of most utility to Shabaab for a suicide operation inside Somalia, or in the region of the Horn of Africa – Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. The reason for this is that these recruits would need “handlers” both to help them navigate through unfamiliar situations and to ensure that they go through with the attack. It is much less likely that the Shabaab would be willing to risk sending a trained and indoctrinated diaspora member back to the US as a “sleeper” for a future terrorist attack in the US. The risks to Shabaab would be enormous. They would not be in a position to easily manage and control their recruit. The recruit could even defect and provide damaging information on the Shabaab to USA law enforcement. And even if the Shabaab managed to send totally committed recruits back to the US, a Shabaab-directed terrorist attack inside the US would almost certainly have disastrous consequences for the Shabaab, not only in terms of the US response, but from Somali society as well. As discussed below, remittances from the diaspora are the economic lifeline of Somalia. Anything that jeopardizes the status of Somalis living abroad imperils the entire country, and the Shabaab would face an enormous blowback from within the Somali community.

In short, the threat of an American of Somali descent joining the Shabaab and then returning as a sleeper in the US is quite low. The threat still requires careful law enforcement attention, but should not be overblown. There is one exception to this assessment. A Somali-Ameri-

can, who joins the Shabaab and who has then proceeded to Pakistan, or Afghanistan and who becomes an Al-Qaeda operative is of much greater concern. The reasoning for this is straightforward. Shabaab's agenda is still essentially a nationalist one, while al Qaeda's is global. Al Qaeda would not weigh the costs of a terrorist attack in the US on the Somali economy and the Somali diaspora, whereas Shabaab would. A Somali-American acting through the ideological prism of al Qaeda would be more willing to serve as a sleeper than would a Shabaab member.

The second question raised by the Minneapolis case is why a Somali-American, who succeeded in fleeing the twenty year war and state collapse in Somalia would opt to join a radical group and return to fight. It is impossible at this time to know the motives of the individuals, who were drawn into the Shabaab, but evidence from the broader Somali community offers some clues. First, Somali communities in the West, like Muslim communities in general, were exposed to, and tended to, embrace strongly critical positions on US foreign policy in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the US occupation of Iraq. For reasons that are well-known, Muslim American populations in general felt besieged, and a portion of this community came to embrace views that were radical in their level of anger and in their belief that this was a war of the West against Islam. The spread of Wahhabist and Jihadist websites exposed Somalis and others to this worldview, and in the case of the Minneapolis youth may have been important in radicalizing them. Other vectors of radicalization – such as after school youth group leaders, or clerics in local mosques – may or may not have played a role in the Minneapolis case, and are the subject of ongoing law enforcement investigations.<sup>21</sup> What is clear from available evidence is that Somali-American communities are heavily clustered in a few neighborhoods and apartment complexes in places like Minneapolis, often very isolated from the broader community, and hence more susceptible to a sense of alienation that a recruiter could exploit.

But a bigger factor in radicalization and recruitment of Somali American youth into the Shabaab was not a global agenda, but rather a nationalist cause. During the period, when the Minneapolis youth were recruited, the Shabaab was the lead armed group in a sustained insurgency to oust neighboring Ethiopia from its unwanted military occupation

of the Somali capital Mogadishu. Most Somalis were vigorously supportive of the insurgency in general, and many viewed the Shabaab as a legitimate expression of anti-imperialist, national liberation. This was a position held even by many Somalis, who found the radical Islamist ideology the Shabaab was associated with, and its links to al Qaeda, very distressing. Put another way, Somalis were mobilized in 2007-08 mainly by a nationalist impulse, and viewed armed groups like the Shabaab as freedom fighters, not terrorists. Importantly, until March 2008 Somali-Americans could embrace that position without fear of breaking the law. It was only in March that the US designated the Shabaab a terrorist group. The Shabaab's success in conflating its Jihadist ideology with Somali nationalism no doubt played a major role in attracting Somali diaspora support, and in recruiting the Minneapolis youth.

If this assessment of the motives of the Minneapolis Somali youth is accurate, it bodes well for the future. Since January 2009, Ethiopian forces have withdrawn from Somalia and a new Somali government, led by moderate Islamists, has been formed. The Shabaab has been deprived of the main rallying points it used to garner local and diaspora support, and now finds itself encountering local armed resistance. It is increasingly seen by Somalis as a spoiler and a tool of foreigners (al Qaeda) to force an unwanted global battle on their territory, and to encourage Somalis to kill one another for a global cause few Somalis support. Under these circumstances, it is quite unlikely Somali diaspora would be open to recruitment into the Shabaab.

## **The African Diaspora in the Gulf States**

Since the early 1970s, millions of Africans have migrated and in some instances settled in the oil-producing Gulf states, while many hundreds of thousands have studied in Egypt and the Gulf states. Sub-Saharan Africa's diaspora in the Gulf states come disproportionately from the Horn of Africa and coastal East Africa, and are mainly, though not exclusively, Muslim. In recent years, greater numbers of Africans from the Sahel states and Nigeria have migrated to the Gulf as well. Those,

who migrate in search of work, tend to relocate to the oil-rich states of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The United Arab Emirates has come to serve as the financial and commercial capital for East Africa and the Horn of Africa, with hundreds of thousands of African businesspeople operating businesses out of Dubai. The third category of African diaspora in the Gulf, students, has increased considerably in number in the past fifteen years, thanks to the rise of well-funded Islamic educational charities, which provide scholarship money for needy African students completing secondary studies at Islamic schools.

Whether student, businessperson, or laborer, African Muslims in the Gulf diaspora are invariably and sometimes systematically exposed to Salafist teachings in and out of the mosque. Most of the African diaspora in the Gulf does not stay there permanently. Returnees from the Gulf states have been a major factor in the expansion of Salafist Islamic activities back in Africa, often working with the rapidly expanding number of Saudi-funded mosques, Madrassas, and charities in their home countries. Though the vast majority of these externally-funded, missionary Salafist mosques and Madrassas are not linked in any way to terrorism, they have the potential to radicalize African Islam and provide more fertile ground for recruitment by Islamist terror groups.<sup>22</sup> The wealth of patronage available from private Gulf-based scholarship funds, NGOs, and businesses contributes to the attractiveness of Salafism among some African Muslims. As Islamic charities funded from the Gulf continue to fill the vacuum in health, education and other sectors created by the collapse of state-based social services, the African diaspora linked to these charities will continue to gain clout and prestige back home.<sup>23</sup> What remains to be seen is if this trend creates a new generation of Salafist African Muslims, or if Africa's Sufi tradition will prevail. If a generational shift does occur within Africa's Muslims, it is an open question whether that will create a more conducive environment for recruitment of young men by Jihadi cells.

Of the millions of African Muslims, who have lived, worked, and studied in the Gulf, very few to date have gravitated towards Jihadi or terrorist activities. But of the small group of Africans believed to be implicated in terrorist activities, nearly all have extensive links to the

Gulf states and the wider Middle East. Somali Islamist hardliner Hassan Dahir Aweys, for instance, resides for extended periods of time in Saudi Arabia and Syria, while Somali Jihadi figure Aden Hashi 'Ayro, trained in Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> The Comoran terrorist Fazul Abdullah Mohamed also traveled extensively in the Middle East in addition to training in Afghanistan.

The rise of Dubai as the de facto financial and commercial capital of East Africa means that a growing number of top African entrepreneurs are now based out of the UAE and constitute a new type of business diaspora with unavoidably close ties to Gulf state sources of funding. Some sources of business partnerships and loans place African businesspeople in relations with individuals or businesses linked to al Qaeda.

The key feature of Africa's diaspora in the Gulf is that its principal role as a terrorist threat is as a vector for Salafist and Jihadi ideology back into Africa.

## The Intra-African Diaspora

The large intra-continental African diaspora (migrants and settlers in other African states) are mainly economic migrants with few rights and little opportunity to organize, but in some instances this sub-category of African diaspora has played a major role in Islamist terrorism. In fact, the single worst instance of terrorism on the continent – the 1998 al Qaeda bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi – was planned and executed mainly by non-Kenyan al Qaeda operatives from other African countries.

The intra-African diaspora is generally “extra-illegal” and lives a life evading, or circumventing, the host government. It is especially active in the parallel economy, and often in criminal activities. This makes the intra-African diaspora especially attractive for terrorist groups seeking to make use of smuggling routes and criminal networks. To date, al Qaeda exploitation of African diaspora transnational criminal networks has been relatively low, confined mainly to involvement in smuggling of “blood diamonds” and other illegal trafficking.<sup>25</sup>

Refugee populations are technically part of the intra-African diaspora, and are especially vulnerable to recruitment by a range of terrorist groups, both Jihadist and other. Africa's refugee camps, many of which have become large semi-permanent peri-urban areas, where refugees are warehoused for decades, are a major source of alienation, despair, and criminality, making them excellent recruiting grounds for terrorists, armed insurgents, and criminal gangs. Fears that Somalia's Ras Kiamboni Jihadist cell, led by Hassan Turki, have recruited in Dadaab camps in northern Kenya illustrate this point.

## The Non-African Diaspora in Africa

By far the greatest terrorist threat emanating from Africa has come from non-African operatives (or diaspora) exploiting weak state security, high levels of corruption, a booming illicit economy, and a wealth of soft Western targets to engage in terrorist activity inside Africa.

Terrorist networks are extensively involved in illicit economic activities in sub-Saharan Africa to generate funding. Smuggling of precious metals is a principal source of revenue. Al Qaeda's involvement in the smuggling of diamonds in West Africa is the most publicized example, but Hezbollah has long been linked to diamond smuggling and other illicit economic activity in DR Congo, via the large Lebanese diaspora there.

Non-African terrorist networks also engage in "legitimate commerce" in Africa to provide cover, to create business networks among local merchants, and to use local business partnerships to launder money, or disguise money transfers. Africa's endless supply of humanitarian crises and underdevelopment also provides opportunities. In a few instances, Islamic charities have either been infiltrated by terrorist cells, or created with the express purpose of raising and diverting funds for relief efforts in Africa, and providing terrorist cells with a cover. The non-Kenyan al Qaeda cell, which established a base in Kenya beginning in 1993, and which was responsible for the 1998 embassy bombing, wasted no time in establishing businesses and a charity there.<sup>26</sup> In addition to serving as a source of revenue, Africa has also provided non-indigenous terrorist

groups with soft western targets, such as embassies (Nairobi and Dar es Salaam), hotels (Kenya), and tourists (Mali).

Evidence suggests that Africa's weak security sector and failed states also provide some non-African diaspora members with safe haven beyond the easy reach of counter-terrorism operations. For example, Haroon Rashid Aswat, an Indian-born citizen of the UK and a suspect in the 2005 London bombings, sought safe haven in Zambia, where he was eventually detected and deported back to the UK. Somalia also served as a periodic safe haven for three al Qaeda operatives implicated in the 1998 embassy bombings in Nairobi.

Finally, in one case a "rogue" African state – Sudan – served as what one US official called a "Holiday Inn for terrorists" between 1991 and 1996.<sup>27</sup> In this singular instance of state-sponsored Islamic terrorism in Africa, a wide range of international terrorists, including Osama bin Laden himself, used Sudan as a base of operations and a safe haven. That safe haven in Africa ended in the latter half of the 1990s, when the costs of pariah status became too great for the Sudanese government and it sidelined its Islamist leader Hassan al Turabi and requested its foreign guests to move on.

## **African Exceptionalism – Towards an Explanation**

What accounts for the low level of involvement in terrorism by the sub-Saharan African Muslim diaspora? Available evidence is very incomplete and does not allow us to provide a definitive answer, but it does at least point to a number of plausible explanations meriting further investigation. These potential explanations are not, of course, mutually exclusive; some could easily be inter-linked and mutually-reinforcing. These propositions tend to fall into one of two different categories – those which suggest a reason why African Muslim diasporas are less predisposed toward radicalization, and those, which focus on why African Muslim diasporas, radicalized or not, are less inclined to engage in Jihadi violence. This distinction is important, as it allows for the possibility that African

Muslim diasporas are in some instances radicalized, but opting not to act on their anger by pursuing terrorism or Jihadi violence.

## **Sufi Islam**

One frequently voiced claim is that sub-Saharan African deep tradition of Sufism makes its Muslim diaspora more resistant to the radicalism of Salafist Islam. What is significant about this line of argument is it focuses on Africa's resistance to radical interpretations of Islam, not terrorism per se. The disdain which Salafist preachers and missionaries hold for Sufi practices is well-documented, but that contempt is mixed with frustration over the difficulty of eradicating deeply held Sufi customs among African Muslims. Most Sufi Muslims in Africa resent Salafism and view it as a "foreign," Saudi form of cultural imperialism. The Sufi criticism of Salafism as Wahhabism is a none too subtle attempt to delegitimize Salafism by conflating it with Saudi culture. African resentment at the implicit (and sometimes explicit) message in Salafism that they are not "true" Muslims may work against efforts to radicalize African diaspora members in and outside the mosque. It is important to distinguish this nuanced proposition from facile generalizations about Sufism being politically quiescent.<sup>28</sup>

## **Other Cultural "Inoculation"**

Some analysts have noted that certain aspects of Jihadi violence may be culturally taboo in many African cultures. For instance, observers have frequently observed that sub-Saharan Africans – Muslim and non-Muslim alike – have a very low rate of suicide and are culturally averse to suicide attacks as part of a terrorist tactic. This cultural and psychological dimension to one important aspect of terrorism is worthy of further research, especially as it pertains to the diaspora, where such cultural taboos and preferences could be eroded over time in their new settings.

Culturally-based explanations are notoriously difficult to measure, and in this instance begs the question of how one could possibly claim the existence of a distinct sub-Saharan African culture. Yet the possibility that some cultural feature of sub-Saharan African Muslim communities plays a role in the diaspora's low involvement in terrorism cannot be discounted just because it is difficult to measure.

## Local Versus Global Agendas

The hot-button issues that have been critical in radicalizing Middle East and south Asian Muslims and in mobilizing support for Jihad by al Qaeda and related Islamic terrorist groups may not resonate as powerfully with most African Muslim communities and their diasporas. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank, American troop presence in Saudi Arabia, the propping up of repressive governments in the Middle East by the West, and more recently the Israeli offensive in southern Lebanon, the US-led invasion of Iraq, and government treatment of Muslim communities in the West in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, have all been critical in mobilizing Jihadi resistance and terrorism. Many observers have noted that many of these issues are not of central importance to African Muslims. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for instance, has never been as dominant in African Muslim discourse, as it has been in the Middle East. The African Muslim diaspora is however much more likely to share grievances with Arab and south Asian Muslims over treatment of Muslims in the West post-9/11. They are also more likely to support armed insurgencies, which could be considered "terrorist" in nature, when those causes are directly linked to their home country. According to this school of thought, African Muslim diasporas are just as capable of supporting political violence and Jihadism, as our other diasporas, but for a variety of reasons are more focused on local rather than global political agendas.

This observation is especially interesting in light of the fact that while African diaspora members are relatively uninvolved in terrorist activities against the West, they can and do support armed insurgencies against their home governments – insurgencies their governments often depict

as “terrorist” in nature. This support by the diaspora to terrorist groups targeting the home government can be secular in nature (such as the Oromo Liberation Front in Ethiopia) or Islamist (such as the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat). The fact that African diaspora members have often been successfully mobilized to support armed groups targeting governments in their home country, but have rarely been mobilized to support terrorist causes with global, anti-Western agendas, is significant. Even hard-line Islamist groups, such as Al-Ittihad in Somalia and Ethiopia, embraced a parochial, pan-Somali platform rather than a global one. In cases, where al Qaeda has sought to frame an African conflict as part of a global Jihad against the West, as occurred when Osama bin Laden issued a video-tape in March 2009, urging Somalis to overthrow the moderate Islamist government of Sheikh Sharif, because it co-exists with Ethiopia and the West, it has met with sharp local pushback. The negative Somali reaction to the bin Laden tape clearly demonstrated a strong aversion to a demand for Somalis to kill one another in the name of a global Jihadi agenda.<sup>29</sup>

Most cases of African diaspora involvement in terrorism involve a high degree of ethnic mobilization and grievances, and support to armed insurgencies typically involves fund-raising efforts within the ethnic group. African governments complain that Western governments allow these terrorists to operate freely out of their countries, and those governments seek to conflate the war on terror with their own struggles against their diaspora, armed insurgents, and at times even against legal opposition. The war on terror has in fact been successfully co-opted by African governments from Ethiopia to Mali to demonize opponents and justify repression of internal opposition.

If African Muslim diaspora mobilization for Jihadi violence is driven by local, not global politics, then we should expect to see trouble precisely among those diasporas, the home countries of which are embroiled in internal conflicts, which are tapping into Muslim grievances. Of special concern are flashpoints in Africa, where Muslim-Christian relations are poor and sectarian tensions have been stoked by political leaders – in Zanzibar, northern Nigeria, Ethiopia/Somalia, Kenya, and other locations. Another source of radicalization and anti-western sentiments that

could produce Jihadist recruits are in African states, where repressive governments are seen as being shored up by the West at the expense of Muslim communities. On this score, the close American alliance with Ethiopia is the most obvious lightning rod. Elsewhere in Africa, US support for multi-party elections has tended to defuse this category of grievance. Unlike in key locations in the Middle East, such as Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, where US-backed governments are authoritarian and repressive, external pressure for democratization by the West in Africa has generally provided new political space and opportunities for Muslim communities there, eliminating a major grievance exploited by al Qaeda in the Middle East.

## Identification With the Arab World

Black Africans have a long, complex, and in places bitter history with the Arab world, a history, which includes slavery and overt racism. The contemporary crises in Sudan – both the recently ended war in the south and now the crisis in Darfur – have tended to take on Arab versus black African tones, which has exacerbated distrust between African and Arab communities. The generally poor treatment Africans receive in Gulf states as migrant laborers also works against the building of a sense of solidarity with Arabs in radical Islamist movements aimed at the West. To the extent that all this is true, some observers argue that the weak display of direct support by the African Muslim diaspora for al Qaeda's causes is a function of the fact that Africans view al Qaeda as primarily an Arab cause, not their own.

What makes this claim intriguing is the pattern of African recruitment into and support for al Qaeda by region. Specifically, African regions with the closest identity to the Arab world are clearly more important sources of recruits into al Qaeda affiliated terrorist cells. North African Muslim populations in the diaspora have been by far the most susceptible to recruitment into al Qaeda and are the principal source of terrorist threats in much of Europe, especially Spain and France. To cite two examples: an estimated 25% of all suicide bombers in Iraq are reportedly of North

African origin, and a Moroccan cell was responsible for the March 2004 train station bombing in Madrid. A second regional category – diaspora members originating from coastal East Africa and the Sahel – have been somewhat susceptible to recruitment into terrorist activities, enough to warrant being treated as a separate regional category of threat. The bombings of US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 were carried out by a cell of coastal East Africans and a Sudanese. Muslim populations in coastal East Africa share close and continued links with the Arab world, while many of the Muslim populations in the rest of the Horn of Africa either consider themselves Arab or are Arabized to some degree. This is straightforward in northern Sudan, where populations are, and see themselves, as, fully Arab. In other Horn of Africa locations the identity is more complex – Somalia, for instance, is a member of the League of Arab States, though Somalis do not speak Arabic as a first language and have often contentious relations with their Arab neighbors to the north.

By contrast, African Muslim diaspora members from the rest of the continent have only an insignificant record of involvement in terrorism. This pattern suggests that degrees of affiliation to the Arab world may matter more than other factors in determining which African Muslim diasporas engage in terrorism. It is at any rate a hypothesis worthy of consideration.

## **Greater Social and Economic Mobility**

As documented in the introduction of this chapter, sub-Saharan African diaspora members in North America enjoy relatively high levels of social mobility and economic opportunity. That may be a decisive difference distinguishing it from the African and North African diaspora in Europe, which occupies – and remains at – the lower portion of the socio-economic ladder. Theorists, such as Samuel Huntington, have long argued that low levels of social and economic mobility can produce frustration and political violence, so the claim made by some that Islamic radicalism in Europe is partially linked to the fact that Muslim immigrants

form what could become a permanent underclass cannot be dismissed out of hand.

To the extent that this pattern is true, and to the extent that levels of social integration and economic success matter in predicting a group's vulnerability to terrorist recruitment, we could expect a lower risk of second-generation African diaspora recruitment into terrorist networks in the US than in Europe.

## Homeland Poverty and Remittance Obligations

One of the most frequently remarked aspect of the 9/11 terrorists – mainly from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan – is that most were middle class and educated, not part of a desperate underclass. These were terrorists, whose family members were generally well-off financially and not dependent on them as sources of money. By contrast, most African diaspora members – whether wealthy or poor, Christian or Muslim – shoulder very serious financial obligations to family members in the homeland. Indeed, the principal reason so many Africans risk the dangerous journey overland and by sea to reach Europe is in order to acquire work, so they can send remittances back to their families. Remittances are a lifeline for many African households, and few African diaspora members are not beholden to relatives back home. Even the poorest diaspora members are expected to send something on a monthly basis. To shirk that responsibility would be to risk rupturing relations with kinsmen and to violate a deep ethical obligation. While many African diaspora members express frustration and resentment at the demands made on them by kin back home, the idea of cutting off remittance flows is unthinkable to most.<sup>30</sup>

The remittance obligation felt by most African diaspora members could be an important clue. To join a terrorist cell, to commit to a suicide mission, would jeopardize the financial lifeline upon which ten or more family members depend. Seen from this vantage point, active involvement in an Islamic terrorist cell is a middle class luxury that few African

Muslims in the diaspora can afford to take on, unless al Qaeda promised compensation to family of African martyrs.

This proposition can cut both ways, of course. If the imperative to provide for extended family back home drives the African diaspora's choices, one could argue that that could become a tool for al Qaeda recruiters to exploit. The economic desperation of most African illegal immigrants seeking entry into Europe could make some of them vulnerable to recruitment as terrorist "mules," willing to facilitate, or commit acts of terrorism not out of commitment to the cause, but merely to earn money.

If it is true that African diaspora members avoid involvement in terrorist activities in part in order to avoid jeopardizing their ability to send remittances, that raises an interesting question about second generation African immigrants, whose obligation to distant family members in a homeland they may have never visited is increasingly tenuous. The second generation diaspora would, according to this logic, be more susceptible to recruitment by Jihadi cells.

As is invariably the case with complex socio-political phenomena, it is likely that most of these factors play a contributory role in explaining the low level of sub-Saharan African recruitment into al Qaeda. In the absence of more compelling evidence, the two most persuasive explanations appear to be the fact that most African Muslim diasporas are animated by more local, not global, political concerns in their home country, and the critical economic role played by the African diaspora, as a source of remittances to their home country, which serves as a disincentive to engage in activities, which would jeopardize the community's ability to send and receive remittances.

## Notes

- 1 A profile of the six mainly East African defendants can be found in “Bomb Plot Trial: The Six Defendants,” *BBC News* (19 January 2007) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6264839.stm>.
- 2 Quoted in Matthew Chance, “Britain’s Home-Grown Terrorists,” *CNN* (15 July 2005) <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/07/14/homegrown.terror/> [accessed March 10 2007]
- 3 The Somali diaspora’s role in the CIC and the *Shabaab* has been covered extensively in the Canadian media. See for example Michelle Shephard, “Radical Somalia: The Toronto Connection,” *Toronto Star* (October 20, 2006), p. 1; Stewart Bell, “Strife’s Monument: Mogadishu Down,” *National Post* (January 20 2007); Stewart Bell, “The Lost Youth,” *National Post* 9 January 22 2007; Stewart Bell, “Charred Evidence of Dead Jihadists: These Were Canadians,” *National Post* (January 22, 2007); and Stewart Bell, ‘Canadians Hold Power in Somalia,’ *National Post* (January 20 2007).
- 4 The impotence of recognizing diversity within the African diaspora – and avoiding over generalizations about the ‘African diaspora’ – is a thesis of a number of recent works. See for instance Leif Manger and Munzoul A.M. Assal, eds., *Diasporas within and without Africa: Dynamism, Heterogeneity, Variation* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2006).
- 5 Farah Khan, “Population: African Union Courts Africans in the Diaspora,” *Global Information Network* (July 14 2003), p. 1.
- 6 Cited in Joseph Winter, ‘African Migrants’ Elusive Dream,’ *BBC news* (24 April 2004) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3632347.stm>.
- 7 These obstacles include inconsistent geographic definitions of “Africa” (continental or sub-Saharan Africa); disagreements over the inclusion of second generation diaspora members; and difficulties of estimating the number of illegal African immigrants. The estimate of ten million comes from Ali Mazrui and Amadu Jacky Kaba, ‘Between the Brain Drain and the Brain Bonus: The African Diaspora as a Nation Afloat,’ (2004), p. 2.
- 8 Economic Commission for Africa, *International Migration and Development: Implications for Africa* (Addis Ababa: ECA, September 2006), p. 2.
- 9 Cited in Mazrui and Kaba, p. 3.
- 10 UN Secretariat, “Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on International Migration and Development,” (A/60/871) <http://www.un.org/esa/population/hldmigration/>.
- 11 UNDP, *Somalia Human Development Report 2001* (Nairobi: UNDP, 2001) p. 61.
- 12 Economic Commission for Africa, *International Migration and Development: Implications for Africa* (Addis Ababa: ECA, September 2006), p. xvi.
- 13 The mixed roles the diaspora can play are captured in University of Peace, “Export Forum: Building Capacity for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora. Final Report,” (Toronto, October 19-20 2006).
- 14 Mazrui and Kaba, p. 3.
- 15 Andrea Elliott, “Between Black and Immigrant Muslims, An Uneasy Alliance,” *New York Times* (11 March 2007) <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/11/nyregion/11muslim.html?hp=&pagewanted=all> [accessed 11 March 2007].
- 16 Kevin Sullivan and Karla Adam, “Trial Opens in London Transit Bombing Plot,” *Washington Post* (Jan. 16 2007), p. A12.
- 17 John Steele and Sally Peck, “Suicide Plot Failed Due to Good Fortune,” *The Telegraph* (17 January 2007) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/01/15/nbomb115.xml> [accessed 10 March 2007]
- 18 “July 21 Bombs Were a Hoax, Court Hears,” *Guardian Unlimited* (March 1 2007).

- 19 Sullivan and Peck, "Suicide Plot."
- 20 The following section on the Minneapolis case is adapted from the author's congressional testimony on this subject. See US Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, "Violent Islamist Extremism: al-Shabaab Recruitment in Somalia," (March 11, 2009).
- 21 See the testimonies of FBI officials and Somali community leaders in the March 11 Senate hearings "Violent Islamist Extremism."
- 22 Concerns that non-violent Salafist missionaries and their externally-funded mosques, madrasses, and charities could create a conducive environment for recruitment of Africans into Jihadi cells are carefully assessed in several International Crisis Group reports, including "Understanding Islamism," Middle East/North Africa Report no. 37, ( 2 March 2005); "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?" Africa Report no. 92 (31 March 2005); and "Somalia's Islamists," Africa Report no. 100 (12 December 2005).
- 23 For an in-depth study of the rise of Somali Islamists as a social and political force via Islamic social services and charities, see Andre Le Sage, "Somalia and the War on Terrorism: Political Islamic Movements and US Counter-Terrorism Efforts," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Ph.D. dissertation, June 2004); see also, International Crisis Group, "Somalia's Islamists" pp. 22-24.
- 24 International Crisis Group, "Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?" Africa Report no. 95 (11 July 2005), pp. 3-5; "Somalia's Islamists," pp. 10-11.
- 25 Douglas Farah, *Blood from Stones: The Secret Financial Network of Terror* (New York: Broadway, Pub. 2004).
- 26 Ken Menkhaus, "Constraints and Opportunities in Ungoverned Space: The Horn of Africa," in Michael Innes, ed., *Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safe Havens* (Praeger, 2007).
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