STRATEGY

Beyond bin Laden
Future trends in terrorism

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Executive summary

The pace and direction of global terrorism is changing. International counterterrorism operations have degraded terrorist networks, killed or captured many key leaders, and forced terrorist groups to shift both location and tactics.

In particular, the death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of US Special Forces in Pakistan in May 2011 marks an important milestone in the decade-long struggle against al-Qaeda. Following bin Laden's death, questions have been raised about the longevity of global salafism as a terrorist movement. Today, many analysts paint al-Qaeda as an 'ageing' terrorist group—one that is unlikely to recover from its many strategic weaknesses.

But the threat of religiously-motivated terrorism remains high. Al-Qaeda's ideology of mass-casualty violence against 'the West' and so-called 'apostate' regimes continues to find pockets of support between Morocco and the Philippines. Ideologically, bin Laden's message is being adapted and reinterpreted by a new generation of terrorist leaders. Through the spread of social media and internet propaganda, that message is increasingly directed towards individuals living in the West.

Under intense pressure, al-Qaeda has been forced to devolve its operational and command responsibilities to a growing list of affiliates and franchises, mostly in North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and South Asia. And these groups are beginning to assert their independence, branching out to conduct international operations of their own.

Global terrorism is now characterised by three interrelated trends: *decentralisation* (the rise of affiliated groups outside al-Qaeda's core leadership in Pakistan and Afghanistan); *localisation* (the emergence of new and semi-autonomous groups which exploit specific political and social grievances in zones of instability and conflict); and *individualisation* (the ideological shift towards the role of the individual terrorist). These trends reflect shifting patterns of

Fighters of the insurgent group of Al-Shabaab celebrate Eid-al-Adha Festival, 27 November 2009.
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geographic and ethnic diversification and the ongoing ideological debate inside the broader jihadist movement.

Australia's geographic isolation provides limited defence against these new operational patterns. Although al-Qaeda has failed on several occasions to conduct an attack inside Australia, the barriers to successful global terrorist operations are being lowered. Individuals, radicalised at home, with no formal connection to terrorist organisations, are an increasingly difficult target for police and intelligence agencies.

New patterns of global terrorism will require more agile and effective policy responses. For Australia, the focus of counterterrorism and counter-radicalisation efforts must shift towards the three areas most at risk from the influence of al-Qaeda's ideology—individuals, institutions and the internet.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Ten years after Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda group launched the now infamous 'Manhattan raid' on the US, the wars against religiously motivated terrorism continue. The struggle against the current wave of Islamist terrorism in places such as Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Indonesia shows few signs of abating. Al-Qaeda's meta-narrative of a fundamental clash of religious ideologies continues to resonate with small groups of militants from Morocco to the Philippines.

The death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of US Special Forces in Pakistan in May 2011 has severed the core organisational hub from its principal figurehead.

But as al-Qaeda enters its third decade as a global terrorist organisation, some analysts now believe that it's suffering from a number of strategic weaknesses. The death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of US Special Forces in Pakistan in May 2011 has severed the core organisational hub from its principal figurehead. Because al-Qaeda relied heavily on the charismatic influence and financial largesse of bin Laden, his death could signal the beginning of its steady marginalisation. According to some official reports, bin Laden was, to the very end, still pulling the operational levers of the organisation from his compound in Pakistan. Not any more.

His replacement, the Egyptian medical doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri, is unlikely to bring the same levels of support or direction to the group. Although al-Zawahiri has been seen as the more intellectual of the two, and has clearly led the ideological direction of the group for many years as its primary spokesperson, he's a much more divisive figure.

Beyond those two individuals, al-Qaeda's leadership succession plans appear to be in disarray. Intelligence gathered within bin Laden's Pakistan compound may have fatally compromised the group's operations. The killing of other senior al-Qaeda leaders, including Ilyas Kashmiri and Atiyah abd al-Rahman just a few weeks later in South Waziristan, gave further credence to such claims. Repeated US drone strikes in Pakistan have compromised the ability of militant groups to find sanctuary. From within the organisation itself, its future must now seem highly uncertain.

Other analysts have begun to argue that al-Qaeda's message of megalomaniacal violence against 'Jews and Crusaders' and associated 'apostate' regimes in the Middle East and North Africa has lost all resonance in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. Although some Sunni Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, have participated in the public demonstrations to remove Arab dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria, they have not done so under al-Qaeda's black banner. Polling data consistently suggests that there's limited support for al-Qaeda among the majority of Arab populations, most of whom oppose jihadist violence and reject bin Laden's pan-Islamist ideology.

Al-Qaeda's principal tactic of planning and conducting mass casualty attacks on Western civilian targets has further undermined its appeal in the Muslim world. The group's original terrorist attacks across Saudi Arabia and East Africa in the 1990s actually killed more Muslims than anyone else, and deep ideological divisions emerged within the central councils of the organisation as a result. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's series of brutal attacks against Iraqi Shi'ites over several years entrenched those divisions within the wider Muslim community and undermined any suggestion that al-Qaeda either represented or supported all Muslims. Although al-Qaeda's narrative of extreme anti-Western violence has won small pockets of support in several countries, including in the West, there are strong signs of a counternarrative emerging from within the wider Muslim community to challenge and refute bin Laden's legacy.

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For these reasons, several analysts now paint al-Qaeda as an 'ageing' or 'moribund' terrorist organisation whose strategic weaknesses, unachievable political objectives and lack of broad international support will see it enter a period of steady decline and irrelevance. Senior US officials have even begun putting a timeframe on al-Qaeda's demise. Michael Vickers, Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, told a Washington conference in September 2011 that, if the current pace of US operations against al-Qaeda continues, 'within 18 to 24 months, core al-Qaeda's cohesion and operational capabilities could be degraded to the point that the group could fragment' (Washington Post 2011a).

Professor David Rapoport's theory of terrorist 'waves' has been used to explain why al-Qaeda may self-destruct sooner than many people think (2002). According to Rapoport, terrorism 'waves' are predictable patterns of activity—usually in cycles of around 40 years—in which terrorist movements expand, contract and eventually dissolve. The groups that form the vanguard of each wave often face decline before the rest of the wave does. According to Rapoport, resistance that emerges from within those organisations, including changing political objectives and generational shifts, contributed to the disappearance of the three previous waves of terrorism—anarchist, socialist and nationalist.

The previous waves displayed remarkably similar characteristics and patterns of behaviour. At the centre of each was a common doctrine that transcended any one particular organisation or leader. Rapoport notes that leftist terrorist groups of the 1960s and 1970s survived only two years on average, but that the wave lasted much longer. The use of communication strategies to promote and sustain doctrinal coherence was crucial to the longevity of the broader movement. And each wave was often inspired by a single historical event that could be manipulated for propaganda purposes—for example, the 1918 Bolshevik revolution for European left-wing groups or, in the case of Palestinian rejectionists, the 1948 creation of the state of Israel. Ultimately, inconsistencies in how the doctrine was applied, strategic errors in operations, repeated tactical mistakes and confusion over the core principles of the movement had the effect of corroding the overall effectiveness and durability of each terrorist wave.

But the historical pattern of international terrorist waves may not be a useful predictor of future trends. Today, the scope and reach of al-Qaeda's ideology, which draws its inspiration from 7th century salafist theological doctrine and sees incitement, hatred and violence as a permanent religious duty, constitutes a far more fundamental challenge to international security than the typically secular, nationalistic strains of previous terrorist waves.

As a strategic actor, al-Qaeda is the first terrorist organisation to fully exploit the processes of globalisation to foster and promote its objectives. 'The propaganda of the deed', as terrorism is often called, has been facilitated by recent developments in global transportation and communications and by modern patterns of social interaction, including the rise of social media. Exploiting the weaknesses of open societies and economies remains a central goal. And the internet has become the group's most effective tool—to the point where we've now reached the age of Terrorism 2.0.

But, as Audrey Kurth Cronin reminds us, terrorism is not war (2008). It's a tactic of low-intensity, asymmetric conflict that can sometimes *mimic* war. And it certainly does have the effect, as the post-9/11 counterterrorism response has shown, of engaging the major powers in costly and sometimes counterproductive military campaigns.

So, what's the future for global jihadist terrorism after bin Laden? Will it follow the same pathway as previous terrorist waves and collapse under the weight of its own strategic errors and internal contradictions? Or is there something inherently different about the current wave of international terrorism that suggests it has the power to galvanise new followers, adapt, rejuvenate and evolve?

This paper seeks to address those questions. By examining the trajectory of modern terrorism, both geographically and operationally, the paper explores the forces that are driving the current direction of violent political extremism around the world.

The paper argues that with or without al-Qaeda as a coherent organisation at the vanguard of the global Islamist movement, religiously motivated terrorism is set to continue for many decades to come. Despite the obvious splintering and factionalisation within al-Qaeda and between al-Qaeda and its various franchises and affiliates, there's no evidence that 'al-Qaedaism' as a motivating ideology is going to dissolve any time soon. Although many contemporary jihadist groups, especially in Southeast Asia, reject al-Qaeda's methods, and most appear disconnected from the Egyptian- and Saudi-dominated al-Qaeda leadership, the local and global manifestations of Islamist terrorism are in fact converging.

This is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the efforts of the Indonesian-based *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) group over the past few years to reach out to al-Qaeda central for operational support, funding and training. The arrest of a senior JI leader, Umar Patek, in Abbottabad, the city in which Osama bin Laden was living in Pakistan, is yet further evidence of the repeated outreach activities of both groups. The emerging strategy among jihadist groups appears to involve diversification (dissolving and creating new organisational structures), promoting the 'individualisation' of jihad and, at the same time, consolidation (strengthening existing transnational linkages).

If al-Qaeda fails, other groups will emerge to take its place.

If al-Qaeda fails, other groups will emerge to take its place. Already, the Pakistan-based *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (LeT) group has branched out to conduct international operations, most famously in the military siege in the Indian port city of Mumbai in December 2008, but also in the failed attempt to have Willie Brigitte and Faheem Lodhi conduct a terrorist attack on an Australian military base in Sydney. Clearly, the operational strength and tempo of the LeT group has increased in recent years, and it's moved beyond its original objectives of fighting for independence against Indian Government forces in Jammu and Kashmir. Similarly, the *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan* group is seeking to venture beyond its traditional battlefields in the tribal belt along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border, and has claimed responsibility for Faizal Shazad's failed May 2010 Times Square car bomb attack in New York.

As the global terrorist threat evolves, new operational patterns will emerge. Already, we've seen increasing numbers of attacks by unaffiliated 'lone wolf' terrorists. Many of those individuals have been inspired by al-Qaeda's Manichean rhetoric but remain outside its operational plans or control. Self-radicalisation over the internet is another growing problem. And, in Southeast Asia, some members of the old jihadist network have taken on the mantle of 'freelance mujahidin', as individuals prepared to fight alone or alongside any group that simply wants to promote the idea of *jihad musallah* (armed jihad).

Other forms of terrorism are on the rise. Radical republican groups, mostly dissident members of the old Irish Republican Army, have returned to terrorism in Northern Ireland. Attacks have increased in each of the past three years. Members of several other extremist groups, often associated with right-wing Christian militia, have been arrested in the US. And, despite the passing of the Cold War more than 20 years ago, Marxist-inspired communist terrorist groups are still active in such places as India and the Philippines.

But none of those groups can match the organisational and operational reach of al-Qaeda. For that reason, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) has assessed that 'al-Qai'da-affiliated groups and others inspired by similar ideology are likely to be the primary source of terrorism threat to western lives and interests for years to come' (Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) 2010a). It's an important judgement to note, and one that we share.

This ASPI *Strategy* paper is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 examines the ideological foundations of the current fourth wave of global terrorism. Chapter 3 looks at how that ideology has been operationalised, and the emerging debate between those who continue to advocate a structured, 'organisational' jihad and the new generation who see individuals, 'freelancers' or small groups as the more appropriate framework for conducting global terrorism. These various strands of modern jihadism (decentralisation, localisation and individualisation) shouldn't be viewed as contradictory—and al-Qaeda, through prominent individuals such the now-deceased American-born preacher Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen, has advocated multiple strategies to attack the West. Chapter 4 discusses the shifting geography of terrorism, including the importance of South Asia and the rise of al-Qaeda-related groups in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Chapter 5 examines the extent of recent terrorist innovation in weapons and tactics, and the possibility that al-Qaeda will acquire and use non-conventional weapons.

Chapter 6 draws on this analysis to sketch out the elements of a more effective counterterrorism strategy for Australia in a post-bin Laden world. The centrepiece of that strategy must be a more robust and better resourced effort to confront the spread of extremist ideology, both at home and abroad. Current government efforts towards countering violent extremism are commendable, but should concentrate on those areas most at risk of radicalisation—individuals, institutions and the internet. And, instead of seeking a 'peace dividend' from Osama bin Laden's death, Australia will need to work even more closely with Southeast Asian governments, particularly Indonesia, in combating the spread of Islamist extremism in our own region.

Chapter 2

BEYOND THE BASE: ISLAMISM, EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

It's clear that security and intelligence agencies around the world face a common problem—and that problem is terrorism driven by distorted religious motives that seeks to influence the minds of young Muslims everywhere.

Fuelled by the writings of prominent radicals such as the Egyptian Sayid Qutb (1906–1966) and later the Palestinian Abdullah Azzam (1941–1989), Islamism seeks to engineer a confrontation with both the West and so-called 'apostate' regimes in order to achieve its three primary objectives—the removal of all Western military forces and political influence from so-called 'Muslim lands', the re-establishment of the Islamic caliphate as a transnational system of government, and the reintroduction of Koranic law.

In strategic terms, Islamism operates differently from previous ideological threats to liberal democracy, such as communism or fascism. Islamism's supranational ideal and protean character mean that it can organise, plan and recruit just as effectively in cosmopolitan cities such as London, Madrid or Sydney as in its more traditional homelands in the Middle East, South Asia or Southeast Asia.

As a matter of strategic preference, the committed Islamist prefers tactics translated from the transnational to the national battlefield as a means of subverting open democracies. Indeed, it's the inherent openness of modern societies that invites recourse to mass casualty

attacks on soft civilian targets such as airports, trains and hotels. The threat is particularly acute in the United Kingdom, but similar processes of radicalisation are evident in the Netherlands, France, the US and, to a lesser extent, in Australia.

The processes of radicalisation, incitement and propaganda leading to violence are central to sustaining this fourth wave of terrorism.

The processes of radicalisation, incitement and propaganda leading to violence are central to sustaining this fourth wave of terrorism. In fact, the Lebanese-based Hezbollah organisation first established combat camera crews in the early 1990s to film attacks on Israeli military positions. Insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan use similar tactics today. The footage is then used in television and internet videos as part of a wider propaganda effort. Such material quickly finds its way to street stalls in Quetta, Jakarta and Leeds.

In terms of radicalising young men in the West, however, the presence of charismatic 'preachers of hate' such as Omar Bakri in London and Abdul Benbrika in Melbourne has been the key factor in turning some towards extremism and violence. As the former Hizb ut-Tahrir organiser in the United Kingdom, Ed Husain, explains in his book, *The Islamist*, groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir were able to manipulate the institutional machinery of local government, mosques and universities to construct the organised character of what they privately called the 'British Jihadi Network'. And the pattern has been replicated elsewhere, including in Europe, Australia and North America.

As a result, the police and intelligence agencies have uncovered a bewildering array of plots since the September 2001 terrorist attacks on Washington and New York, including the Dhiren Barot plot to plant a radiological or 'dirty' bomb in London and the August 2006 Atlantic 'airlines plot' to blow up transatlantic flights using mixed chemicals. In Australia alone, four major mass casualty attacks have been averted. Several other attacks have failed only because of poor operational planning, including Umar Farouk Abdulmuttalab's Christmas Day attempt to bomb a US-bound flight in 2009, Najibullah Zazi's disrupted effort to bomb the New York subway, and the attempt by Faizal Shazad to detonate a car bomb in Times Square in 2010. It should be noted, however, that the only reason that Abdulmuttalab and Shazad failed was their amateur bomb-making skills. Both attacks had already breached existing security measures, and would have killed tens if not hundreds of people had they succeeded.

Of the 20 major terrorist plots against the West uncovered in 2010, only one was connected to the core al-Qaeda leadership, four were attributed to al-Qaeda's franchise operations, and the other fifteen originated from grassroots militants (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Total terrorism incidents worldwide

Source: RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents
http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents.html
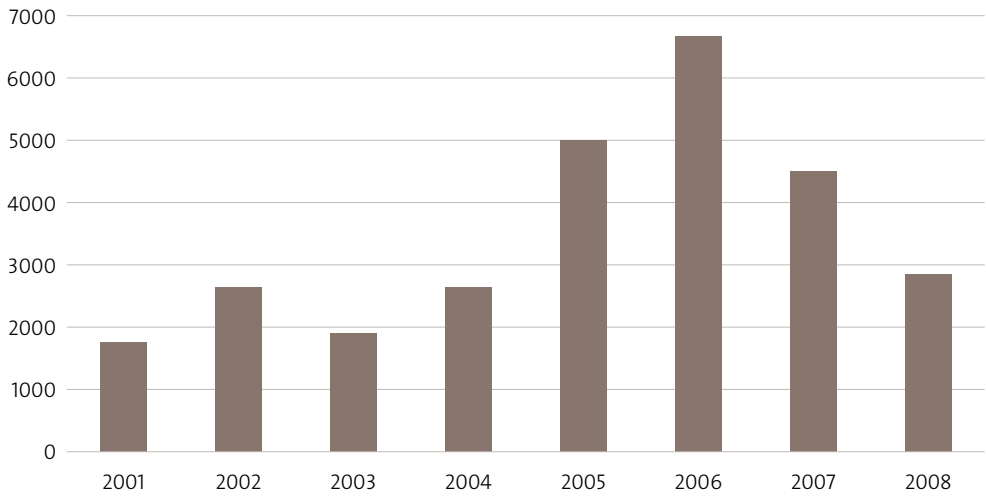
Figure 2: Incidents by region

Source: RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents
http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents.html
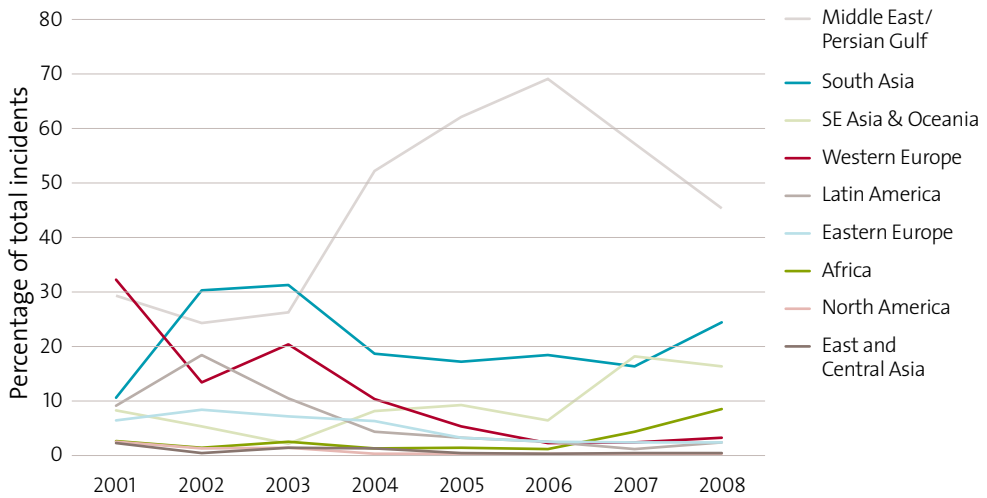
Recently, the head of the British secret intelligence service, Sir John Sawers, outlined the shifting nature of the global terrorist threat:

> Precisely because we are having some success in closing down the space for terrorist recruitment and planning in the UK, the extremists are increasingly preparing their attacks against British targets from abroad. It's not just the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Qaeda affiliates in Yemen, Somalia and North Africa pose real threats to the UK. From his remote base in Yemen, al-Qaeda leader and US national Anwar al-Awlaki broadcasts propaganda and terrorist instruction in fluent English over the internet.

The overall assessment of the intelligence agencies is that the terrorist threat is both expanding and intensifying, and that al-Qaeda remains intent on using violent means to attack the West and to disrupt the global economy.

Core and periphery

Increasingly, the 'war on terrorism' is a conflict not just against al-Qaeda, but against al-Qaeda's associates, affiliates and support networks in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. This is the key judgement from the Obama administration's 2011 counterterrorism strategy paper:

> Affiliated movements have taken root far beyond al-Qa'ida's core leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including in the Middle East, East Africa, the Maghreb and Sahel regions of northwest Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. Although each group is unique, all aspire to advance al-Qa'ida's regional and global agenda—by destabilizing the countries in which they train and operate, attacking US and other Western interests in the region, and in some cases plotting to strike the US homeland (White House 2011).

Groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Qaeda in Iraq are becoming more dangerous, operationally, than the remnants of the old core leadership in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These affiliated groups now carry out most 'al-Qaeda' branded attacks. They're also beginning to operate internationally, no longer constrained to their local theatres. In 2010, AQAP conducted its first attack outside of Yemen and Somalia, killing 76 people in Uganda during the soccer World Cup. In addition, newer Islamist groups have emerged in neighbouring states, such as the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria, with ties to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb militants.

Despite the decentralisation of the global salafist jihad, the al-Qaeda core still plays an important role. Regional affiliates have assumed a degree of operational independence, but they occasionally still answer to the core leadership on important strategic issues. And attacks outside their regions still require approval from the Pakistan-based leadership.

This highlights the less traditionally hierarchical structure of al-Qaeda. Although there are layers of command and residual influence, direct lines of command can be obscure. Personal linkages are more important in maintaining this 'devolved network hierarchy', in which al-Qaeda central provides strategic and ideological oversight to operationally independent affiliates. If al-Qaeda is to continue to exert such oversight, it must have a strong and capable leader.

Ayman al-Zawahiri's succession to the leadership resolves al-Qaeda's most immediate challenge. As bin Laden's longstanding deputy, Zawahiri was his logical replacement. However, it took six weeks for al-Qaeda to release an official statement announcing this move. The time lag may have been due to security fears and a communication lockdown, but it could also imply a level of instability or uncertainty within the central leadership group.

Many analysts believe that Zawahiri, while strategically competent, isn't charismatic enough to lead al-Qaeda in the long term. He doesn't inspire the same level of respect from followers as bin Laden did. In a network based on close relationships and personalities, Zawahiri's lack of charisma is a major weakness. He's also a potentially divisive character. His videotaped eulogy of bin Laden was reported to have alienated conservative elements of the al-Qaeda network. And although Zawahiri has now received endorsements as the new *amir* of al-Qaeda from most franchises around the world, it took several months before those statements of support were forthcoming.

The continued existence of an organisation such as al-Qaeda depends on maintaining ideological and strategic coherence. If Zawahiri is unable to maintain connections and inspire confidence across a wide and growing network, further fractures may occur. And, if he

survives, it will become increasingly difficult for him to exercise organisational control from his remote base in the Pakistan mountains if the US maintains its current policy of intelligence-led drone strikes against the al-Qaeda leadership. According to a White House press briefing, fragmentation may not occur immediately, but the death of bin Laden puts al-Qaeda 'on a path of decline that will be difficult to reverse'.

Even bin Laden himself had difficulties uniting the groups that now comprise the wider al-Qaeda network. It was only after the 9/11 attacks drew the US into armed conflicts in the Middle East and West Asia that bin Laden managed to cement those alliances. However, the continued presence of a common enemy might not be enough to ensure group unity and survival.

Without the personal charisma of bin Laden, concerns about Zawahiri's credibility and leadership could also result in the fracturing of ties between various network nodes. That would be a further blow to al-Qaeda as a global network. It wouldn't eliminate the terrorist threat altogether, or directly affect the network's operational capacity in the short term, but would reduce its ability to provide ideological and strategic oversight. Dissolving the glue that holds the broader movement together is likely to speed the processes of localisation and individualisation.

Analysts have increasingly focused on the importance of the second-tier leadership in linking the core and affiliates. Those relationships will be vital in maintaining the connections and unity between various levels of al-Qaeda. However, the influence of Zawahiri and his close advisers cannot be ignored. Although second-tier leaders may be able to ensure continued communication links across the network, al-Qaeda has always relied on a central leadership command structure to maintain momentum.

If counterterrorism efforts continue to hamper al-Qaeda's network and force it to remain in damage control while it solves the problems of succession and unity, it may lose its position as vanguard of the global salafist jihad. Al-Qaeda must be uncertain about what intelligence the US gained from the materials in bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad. This may force it to go to ground to stop further high-profile losses and to prevent any further compromise of the network. The subsequent killing of high-level jihadist leaders such as Anwar al-Awlaki, Ilyas Kashmiri and Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, al-Qaeda's newly appointed deputy, will increase that uncertainty. The US Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, has suggested that we are 'within reach of strategically defeating al-Qaeda'.

The current situation presents a real dilemma for the group. Lockdown may provide greater security, but also reduces al-Qaeda's profile in the media during a tumultuous time. A large attack would provide ample media coverage, yet would also involve great risk and, potentially, exposure. A sustained wave of smaller scale attacks would be easier to achieve. In the immediate wake of bin Laden's death, that appears to be the preferred option: multiple small-scale attacks in Pakistan and Iraq throughout 2011 were attributed to al-Qaeda.

Zawahiri is seeking to regain the momentum by exploiting the political uncertainties arising from the Arab Spring uprisings. In a series of audio messages released by al-Qaeda's As-Sahab ('The Clouds') media forum in 2011, Zawahiri has capitalised on the repressive actions of the regimes in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen to urge followers to see al-Qaeda as a legitimate partner in the revolutions against US-backed authoritarian governments. In one of his many statements on Egypt, Zawahiri has argued that America is trying to steal the revolution from

the people by keeping a pro-US military government in power. The extent to which that message will resonate on the streets of Cairo, Tripoli or Damascus is, as yet, unknown.

Al-Qaeda will seek to continue to use ongoing regional uncertainties to its advantage. The success of groups such as AQAP in Yemen and al-Shabaab (the Youth) in Somalia is enabled by the chaotic nature of their political environments. Failed or fragile states like Somalia and Yemen provide the perfect operational grounds for terrorist groups to train, recruit and transmit propaganda. And the current turmoil in the Middle East may provide further opportunities for al-Qaeda to exploit. It may also benefit from the potential emergence of 'soft' non-authoritarian regimes that fail to address broader social and economic grievances among disenchanted Arab populations.

Violence inspired by al-Qaeda will continue, and local ethnic and sectarian grievances will remain a focus for regional organisations.

The death of bin Laden, therefore, places a great deal of strain on al-Qaeda as an organisation at a time when many believe it's fading from relevance anyway. But that doesn't mean that salafist terrorism has lost its appeal. Violence inspired by al-Qaeda will continue, and local ethnic and sectarian grievances will remain a focus for regional organisations. Attempted attacks are likely to continue. Even if the organisation fractures, the ideological movement will remain strong. And the current trends of decentralisation, localisation and atomisation are likely to continue.

Ideological roots

The main reason is that al-Qaeda's ideology is both universal and revolutionary. It's calibrated to the virtual world of the internet, which is crucial for recruitment, information dissemination and operational planning. In other words, although bin Laden tried to recreate the caliphate (*kalifa*) of the first 'rightly guided' successors of the Prophet Mohammed (*salafis*), he has ensured the longevity of his cause by adapting both the message and the practice to the demands of modernity and its technology.

Al-Qaeda's global pretensions, however, bulge with paradox. It's a network-based social order, facilitated by globalisation, but without a real society. It's atomised, but without true individualism. And it can operate effectively in a diversity of countries and settings, but without intellectual or political pluralism.

Attachment to this vision of a new Islamist order is particularly attractive in conditions where tradition and community have eroded. This explains the appeal of militant Islamism in zones of conflict in the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia. It also explains why extreme examples of neo-orthodoxy appear among those uprooted from community and tradition, and attract recruits to fundamentalism among the Muslim diaspora communities in the West.

Al-Qaeda's reinterpretation of religion seems to offer an answer, albeit an apocalyptic one, to the dilemma that's confronted Islam since the 18th century. It recognises that Islam as a form of social and political order failed to adjust to the demands of modernity, and this has constituted

a source of 'Muslim rage'. At the same time, and paradoxically, radical Islamists have seen in this failure an opportunity not only to reform the Arab/Muslim world along fundamentalist lines, but also to extend that order internationally in the form of a globalised and networked order that offers a virtual realisation of the Islamic ideal of the 7th century *kalifa*.

The structure and the strategy, however, require a calibrated ideology. Thus, while terrorist organisations such as Sendero Luminoso, Aum Shinrikyo and the Aryan Nation developed tactics suitable for disrupting the existing political order, al-Qaeda has proved most successful in devising a transnational ideology supported by a sophisticated media and communications strategy to win hearts and minds, both locally and globally. In his August 2011 videotaped message as the new al-Qaeda leader, Zawahiri acknowledged that the strategy would require both the force of argument and the force of arms: 'the Muslim movement in general and the jihadi movement in particular should wage the battle of intellectual argument just as much as the battle of weapons.'

The increasingly networked and interconnected nature of the global salafist jihad underscores the importance of understanding how such groups organise and sustain themselves. The next chapter assesses how jihadist terror networks form, mutate and interconnect to conduct current operations. It builds a picture of the changing infrastructure that sustains modern jihadist practice, which thinks locally and acts globally according to a best practice of franchised decentralisation. This analysis is crucial to understanding the nature, extent and global connectivity of 'homegrown' terrorism.

Chapter 3

THE EVOLVING NETWORK: ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Within the field of terrorism studies, an important debate has emerged over the nature and direction of the global terrorist threat. The debate has focused on disagreements between two leading terrorism experts, Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman, which began in 2008 following a critical review of Sageman's book, *Leaderless jihad*, and has continued in follow-up articles (Hoffman 2008).

The debate captures one of the most important questions in contemporary terrorism research: is the global terrorist threat primarily from coherent, structured organisations such as al-Qaeda, or is it from leaderless 'bunches of guys' who have bought into salafist ideology but who have little or no attachment to al-Qaeda's leadership and remain outside its operational control? Such a question is of profound importance due to its potential impact on counterterrorism policies.

Sageman argues that al-Qaeda is becoming less relevant as a strategic centre of gravity. Counterterrorism efforts and the war in Afghanistan have placed pressure on the central leadership, denying it the ability to control or direct future operations. In order to survive, al-Qaeda has decentralised, giving it a level of resilience and survivability. Yet this also limits the central leadership's ability to issue orders and to operate training camps.

Therefore, Sageman sees the greater threat coming from what he calls leaderless gangs, or 'bunches of guys'. Through his analysis of several hundred case studies of individual jihadists, he emphasises the importance of social connections in the radicalisation of those individuals. Often, social connections are more important than ideology in the first stages of radicalisation. Groups of individuals form bonds and spur each other towards radicalisation. This escalation may eventually lead the group to reach out to become part of the global jihad through violent extremism.

To Sageman, this process usually does not involve top-down recruitment from terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda. Rather, individuals reach out to the organisations. Thus, they acquire inspiration and sometimes training from terrorist organisations, but they tend to operate independently. Increasingly, the internet has allowed such self-radicalised groups to connect with the global jihad and gain training without ever forming direct connections with terrorist organisations.

Although Sageman agrees that al-Qaeda still exists and poses a threat, he sees its current role as inspirational, not operational. The far greater threat comes from homegrown terrorists.

Hoffman accepts that al-Qaeda has faced increasing pressure through counterterrorism measures and the loss of sanctuaries in Afghanistan. However, he points to the central leadership's relocation to Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas and its continued ability to raise money, train recruits and plan attacks outside the region. Under such conditions, he sees a resurgent al-Qaeda as the primary threat to the West. He quotes several intelligence sources, including the 2007 National Intelligence Assessment, to support that claim.

Hoffman argues that al-Qaeda has been involved in every major terrorist attack since 9/11. He points to an active recruitment program in which terrorist organisations seek out radicalised individuals and groups and draw them into the larger organisational milieu. The central leadership and its affiliates are heavily involved in recruitment and strategic oversight. Hoffman's critical of what he sees as Sageman's dismissal of this core threat and a preoccupation with 'homegrown' radicals.

Yet both experts agree that al-Qaeda still exists and poses a potential risk. They also agree that homegrown extremists are dangerous. The difference is one of emphasis. Sageman, with a background in psychology and intelligence, focuses on the processes of radicalisation: he believes that influence and power are dispersing from the central leadership and that the operational onus is shifting to the individuals and small groups carrying out the attacks. Hoffman focuses on organisational structure and sees the leadership as still heavily involved in controlling the actions of the global jihad.

Methodology

This debate highlights the importance of methodology and interpretation in understanding the nature and direction of terrorist threats. Since 9/11, interest in terrorism studies has expanded rapidly. Other academic fields, such as applied mathematics, sociology and psychology, have been co-opted into terrorism research. Although most studies still use network and organisational theories to explain the structure and operations of terrorist groups, a broader range of qualitative and quantitative methods is being employed (Zelinsky and Shubik 2009). Overall, the expansion of methods used to aggregate and interpret data has led to a more intricate and nuanced examination of terrorism trends, but in some cases the academic study of terrorism has obscured more than it has illuminated.

Overall, the field would benefit from more primary research. Conducting interviews with terrorists is an underutilised method to gain valuable insights into individuals' pathways towards violence. Court transcripts, media transcripts and statements are an alternative; however, they are not interactive, and therefore lack authenticity.

...primary research is critical to understanding the processes of radicalisation leading to extremism.

In particular, primary research is critical to understanding the processes of radicalisation leading to extremism. Knowing how and why people become terrorists is vital to combating terrorism at its source. Understanding the roles of education, family linkages, economic opportunities and exposure to extremist ideology is the key element in building a stronger sociological profile of individual terrorists. But it's important also to note that there's no single pathway towards radicalisation. Different circumstances will apply to different individuals.

Current trends

The current landscape of international jihadist terrorism is characterised by three interrelated trends: decentralisation, localisation and individualisation. These trends are partly a response to the success of counterterrorism efforts since 2001, but they also reflect shifting patterns of geographic and ethnic diversification and the ongoing ideological debate inside the broader jihadist movement between those who advocate *jihad tanzim* (organised jihad) and those who would prefer to focus on *jihad fardiyah* (individual jihad).

Decentralisation

The global terrorist threat has become more decentralised since 2001. Al-Qaeda has never had complete operational control over its various offshoots and affiliated partners. From its earliest origins, al-Qaeda ('the base') was only ever meant to be a foundation for the mobilisation of Muslims around the world (the *ummah*). It briefly adopted the structure of a military hierarchy under Osama bin Laden in the 1990s, but over time has become a much flatter organisation, increasingly outsourcing the global jihad to both a formal and an informal network of groups and individuals.

Al-Qaeda's affiliated organisations have demonstrated their own ability to evolve and adapt in recent times. The trend has been towards smaller and more autonomous cells. ASIO's 2010 annual report highlighted the fact that regional affiliates and ideologically inspired actors are 'likely to be the primary source of terrorism threat to western lives and interests for years to come' (ASIO 2010b). Those groups, most notably AQAP, have initiated plots outside their home regions. AQAP was responsible for the attempted 2009 Christmas Day bombings and the October 2010 toner cartridge bombing on transatlantic flights. They follow the overall strategic direction of al-Qaeda's core, but have taken on a high degree of operational independence.

In some ways, decentralisation has diminished al-Qaeda's capacity to conduct mass casualty attacks but has also hardened the terrorist organisation against existing counterterrorism measures. The relative autonomy of regional affiliates makes it more difficult to detect and intercept terrorist activity and communications. The collection of human source intelligence on small, autonomous cells requires enormous resources.

Relocation to the tribal areas in Pakistan has provided the core leadership with a sanctuary for more than a decade. Operating from remote locations in Pakistan and Yemen makes it harder for US forces to disrupt their networks. Nevertheless, drone strikes and commando raids, such as on bin Laden's Abbottabad compound, have continued to place pressure on al-Qaeda's leadership. In response, al-Qaeda has proved itself capable of rapidly replacing losses, including of mid- and high-ranking personnel. Decapitation of the command structure is therefore unlikely to prove fatal to the movement unless it involves the removal of several high-ranking leaders simultaneously, including Zawahiri. That would severely disrupt an organisation such as al-Qaeda. The threat of terrorism would not, however, disappear.

Localisation

The decentralisation of al-Qaeda's operations has increased the prominence of local struggles within the global salafist jihad, and operational independence has allowed affiliates to pursue local political agendas. A report by the International Crisis Group shows that, with the splintering of organisations such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), local grievances between Muslims and Christians have taken on a renewed focus in Indonesia (International Crisis Group 2011). JI's offshoots are using local conflicts to build greater popular support. Attention has focused mainly on attacking the 'near' enemy—the Indonesian state, which jihadists have called *thogut* ('evil'). This is also true elsewhere. The Iraqi Government remains a focus for local sectarian conflict between Sunnis, Shi'a and Kurds.

Localisation doesn't mean that the groups have abandoned al-Qaeda's broader campaign. The continued targeting of Western interests indicates adhesion to al-Qaeda's 'far enemy' strategy. The core leadership is involved in coordinating the strategic narrative of its affiliates to ensure that it remains relevant. Leaders have issued directives calling for Mumbai-style attacks on Western countries (Temple-Raston 2010). The data from bin Laden's compound indicates that core leaders, while not involved in the day-to-day control of operations, are involved in aiding affiliates to plan and carry out such attacks.

Ideological affinity, which is perhaps even more important than strategic oversight, binds the global salafist jihad together. Organisational bonds have weakened and local conflicts have become more prominent, but the al-Qaeda core has co-opted those conflicts into its global narrative. By embracing local conflicts waged by autonomous operators, al-Qaeda uses those struggles to achieve its global goals.

However, the effectiveness of such coordination is in doubt. The localisation of conflicts has the potential to work against the organisation's overarching ideology and legitimacy. Its inability to rein in particularly savage individuals, such as al-Zarqawi before his death in 2006, highlights the weaknesses of central control. Local struggles are often sectarian, and increasing attacks on Muslims have turned the support of many religious authorities away from al-Qaeda. The cohesion of the global salafist jihad will continue to rely on popular support and ideological unity. The sectarian nature of current conflicts in places such as Indonesia, Somalia and Iraq is working against that solidarity.

Individualisation

Together, decentralisation and localisation have led to an atomisation of the global threat. Most recent attacks have been carried out by small groups of terrorists or 'lone wolves' who are unaffiliated with larger terrorist organisations. Some individuals have received training or advice from elements within the al-Qaeda organisation, but many are not actual members (ASIO 2010c). Major Nidal Hasan, the alleged Fort Hood shooter, was in contact with Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen, but he wasn't a member of AQAP. Likewise, several terrorists in the Indonesian prison system now claim to be 'freelance' jihadists. They'll only undertake operations they see as legitimate, rather than working as dedicated members of an organisation. They work alongside such organisations when their goals coincide, but they no longer wish to pledge formal allegiance to an *amir* or to a group.

The trend towards 'individualisation' follows an important shift in strategic thinking among various leaders in the jihadist 'community'.

The trend towards 'individualisation' follows an important shift in strategic thinking among various leaders in the jihadist 'community'. This shift was first articulated in 2005 in a 1,600-page book by Abu Musab al-Suri, originally known as Mustafa Sethmarian Nasar, and a former member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Suri's lengthy treatise, *A call to the global Islamic resistance*, is among the most cited *jihadi* texts around the world. In it, he calls for a new operational theory—'the jihad of the individual'—in order to circumvent Western counterterrorism successes. Al-Suri's work has been interpreted as both a direct ideological challenge to bin Laden's preference for building an organisational 'base', and a blueprint for the future of jihadist guerrilla warfare. But internal cleavages and ideological battles have been a common feature throughout al-Qaeda's history and simply represent the intellectual dynamism that is a feature of contemporary jihadist discourse.

Since al-Suri's arrest in 2005, the promotion of this new strategy has been a common theme in each edition of al-Qaeda's *Inspire* magazine, which is published online from AQAP's base in Yemen. In a March 2010 video titled *A call to arms*, another American-born al-Qaeda propagandist, Adam Gadahn, reinforced the basic tactical approach—convincing untrained individuals to conduct simple attacks using available weapons. In subsequent video messages in 2011, Gadahn urged all Muslims in the West to 'take the task upon yourself' to target major institutions and public figures.

This trend also marks the shift in the locus of strategic and operational planning between al-Qaeda central and its regional affiliates. Until recently, the core al-Qaeda leadership dictated the operational approach to be followed. However, the core group has now had to accept and endorse al-Suri's 'grassroots' tactics and, in doing so, to relinquish some of its operational control.

The increasing threat posed by lone offenders using small-arms operations has been evidenced by the March 2011 attack at Frankfurt Airport in Germany that killed two US military personnel and by a second planned attack in July 2011 at the Fort Hood military base in the US. Moreover, the frequency of attacks using small-unit tactics that began in

Mumbai in 2008 appears to be building. According to a 2011 US joint intelligence bulletin, the attractiveness of small-unit assault tactics is possibly driven by the recent failure of improvised explosive device attacks in the US, the complexity of bomb construction and relatively easy access to weapons (Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation 2011).

Despite some earlier misgivings, al-Qaeda and other groups appear to be promoting the utility of individualised, homegrown terrorism to further their global objectives. Dissemination of the salafist ideology inspires alienated individuals and groups to take up the cause without officially joining the larger organisation. The emergence of *Inspire* magazine shows a particular focus on recruiting beyond traditional regions. Other methods include the use of 'jihadi cool' rap music and children's video animations in a deliberate effort to radicalise youth. Native born and naturalised Muslims in Western countries are key targets of these initiatives.

...as the shift towards the individualisation of jihad continues, and counterterrorism efforts in profiling improve, the use of women and children, particularly those living in the West, has taken on a renewed focus.

The deliberate cultivation of women and children in order to conduct terrorist operations is growing, but is not new. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam pioneered the tactic in their long-running struggle against the Sinhalese government in Sri Lanka. However, as the shift towards the individualisation of jihad continues, and counterterrorism efforts in profiling improve, the use of women and children, particularly those living in the West, has taken on a renewed focus. In 2010, the US Government reportedly requested that 23 women in Australia, most of them Australian citizens, be placed on travel restrictions, including the international 'no-fly' list. Many of them had a previous or existing association with Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen.

Each of these trends and methods is facilitated by the increasingly globalised nature of the terrorist threat. The internet allows individuals and small groups to connect with the global jihad ideologically without officially joining an organisation. Self-radicalised individuals and groups can gain knowledge and basic training through the proliferation of *jihadi* websites, negating the need to travel to terrorist training camps. This phenomenon is increasing the number of attacks that are inspired globally, but funded, planned and carried out locally.

Chapter 4

THE SHIFTING GEOGRAPHY OF TERRORISM

The geography of terrorism is changing. In his book, *The Islamist*, Ed Husain noted that Islamist groups in the United Kingdom first exploited the perceived Western indifference to the plight of Bosnian Muslims to radicalise young British recruits in the 1990s. Once recruited, those individuals then attended training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan to serve in the jihad in Bosnia.

The training of tens of thousands of *mujahidin* throughout the 1990s was instrumental in transferring Islamist political thinking to metropolitan centres such as London, Paris and Jakarta. The removal of the Taliban regime in 2001 and the alliance between Pakistan and the US has dampened many of the opportunities for jihadist training in South Asia. But, as the recent attacks in Mumbai and Lahore demonstrate, the infrastructure of terrorism throughout this region continues to provide the ideological and physical training necessary for the continued spread of extremist rhetoric and violence.

Indeed, a geographic base in South Asia may not be as important as it was 10 years ago. Global communications networks provided by the internet are now as important, if not more so, than physical training facilities. As Bruce Hoffman has noted, the 'physical sanctuary provided by Afghanistan in the 1990s has been replaced by the virtual sanctuary of the internet.' The internet serves two useful purposes for terrorist groups: it provides a global outlet for propaganda activities and, increasingly, it serves as a tool for the radicalisation of individuals.

The proliferation of 'grey zones' or areas of statelessness is another factor in providing opportunities for terrorist activity. Such zones exist when states lack the capacity to exert real jurisdictional control through competent law enforcement. Between the Balkans and Bangladesh, there are large populations dissatisfied with their systems of government and inclined towards violent opposition. And Australia's

geostrategic isolation is becoming a less effective barrier to the sorts of transnational security threats facing other parts of the globe.

For the foreseeable future... terrorism will remain centred in South Asia and the Middle East. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq are the pivotal states.

For the foreseeable future, however, terrorism will remain centred in South Asia and the Middle East. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq are the pivotal states. And, as the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan begins to wind down, foreign jihadists are likely to either return home or seek out other regions of conflict. Several hundred veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have already relocated to the Middle East and North Africa to escape US counterterrorism operations.

According to the US Department of State, each year around 70% of reported terrorist attacks occur in just two regions—South Asia, the Middle East/North Africa and Southeast Asia. Of those, South Asia is by far the most deadly, accounting for more than 40% of global fatalities. The infrastructure of terrorism in these regions is discussed in detail below.

South Asia

South Asia accommodates over 1.5 billion people, including 844 million living in extreme poverty, making it the world's largest concentration of impoverished people. Despite significant improvements in the Human Development Index since 1970, the region as a whole still lags behind global averages in human development indicators.

With a growing population, South Asian states continue to struggle to cope with rising unemployment, rampant corruption and widespread public alienation due to poor governance and a lack of basic amenities such as health, education and safe drinking water. The region provides an ideal setting in which political unrest, ethnic conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism can incubate and thrive. After half a decade of turmoil, however, South Asia has recently been experiencing some successes in combating these challenges, particularly terrorism.

Although the internal security situation in Pakistan continues to deteriorate, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan have witnessed a marked improvement. However, **India**, the largest of the South Asian states, faces a new security threat in the form of homegrown terrorism perpetrated by an indigenous terrorist group known as the *Indian Mujahideen*, which is regarded as the successor of the Student Islamic Movement of India that was created in 1977 and banned in 2002 by the Indian Government for terrorist activities and links with Pakistan-based terrorist groups. After taking over, the Indian Mujahideen detonated bombs in the major cities of Ahmadabad, Assam, Bangalore, Delhi, Gauhati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Mumbai, Pune and Varanasi in the period from 2007 to 2010. In 2010, it was proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the Indian Government. Between 1994 and 2010, more than 55,000 people were killed in terrorist violence in India, but numbers have declined from a peak of 5,839 in 2001 to 1,902 in 2010.

Another threat to India's security has emanated from left-wing extremism, perpetrated by the 40,000-strong Communist Party of India (Maoist) fighters—also referred to as Naxals—who have fought for socioeconomic rights, mining and resources, and governance

and development in the tribal areas. More than 6,300 people have been killed in left-wing extremism since 2003 in an area known as the 'Red Corridor', which stretches from the east through to the central parts and down to the south of India. As the Maoists continue to target the Indian security forces, the government has combined a strong military response with the implementation of several welfare and development schemes.

In the north, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a significant reduction in casualties between 2009 and 2010. Although 133 civilians and 125 security personnel were killed, 471 terrorists were eliminated during that period (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2011). Declining fatalities indicate that India's policy approach—comprising political dialogue, counterterrorism operations and large-scale development initiatives—has been showing some signs of progress. In India's seven northeastern states (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura), relative improvement has been recorded in recent years. Civilian casualties declined from 264 in 2009 to 94 in 2010; casualties among the security forces declined from 42 to 20 over the same period. Extremists killed, arrested and surrendered numbered 3,842 in 2009 and 3,306 in 2010.

The island nation of **Sri Lanka** restored normalcy with the end of the civil war in May 2009 and the elimination of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, or Tamil Tigers) leader Vilupillai Prabhakaran by the Sri Lankan armed forces. More than 70,000 lives were lost during the war, which has left enormous humanitarian and reconstruction challenges in Sri Lanka's north, but the most daunting task is to achieve reconciliation with the Tamil community. Precisely how the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils accomplish that will perhaps determine the longevity of the peace in Sri Lanka.

The LTTE has no known operational ties to al-Qaeda, but some of the Tigers' tactics, including the use of suicide vests on children and improvised explosives, have been copied by other terrorist groups—including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Palestinian groups such as Hamas.

Elements within the global Tamil diaspora are believed to be working towards reviving the LTTE. In May 2011, a Tamil leader was arrested in Norway over alleged terrorist links; others, such as those associated with the Global Tamil Forum, have continued to advocate armed struggle against the Sri Lankan Government.

Bangladesh has achieved some success in its deradicalisation campaign and operations against terrorist groups on its soil. From a peak of 35 deaths in 2005, when over 450 serial bombings were undertaken by the Jamaatul Mijhahideen Bangaladesh and the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangaladesh, fatalities have declined significantly in the past five years. In 2011, no casualties of terrorist violence have been reported so far.

The Himalayan nation of **Nepal**, which formally overthrew its 240-year-old monarchy in 2008, has seen the end of a bloody 15-year insurgency, but still grapples with deep political crises and bitter differences between its major political parties, the Communist Party of Nepal–Unified Marxist-Leninist, the Nepali Congress, the United Democratic Madeshi Front and the United Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (formerly an insurgent group and the main challenger to the monarchy and successive governments since 1996). With the Hindu monarchy now relegated to history and the Maoists accepted into the political mainstream, Nepal's leftist insurgency can be considered closed, for the time being. A more sustained peace will depend on the settlement of such issues as the rehabilitation and integration of the ex-Maoist combatants into the Nepalese Army and the success of the present Constituent Assembly in framing a new constitution that provides for genuine parliamentary democracy and the rule of law and, above all, safeguards the rights of Nepal's minority communities, such as the Madeshis.

The neighbouring kingdom of **Bhutan** has also remained peaceful since 2003, barring a low-intensity explosion in January 2008 in the country's capital, Thimpu, in which no loss of life was reported. Like Bangladesh, however, Bhutan has been used by insurgent groups from India's northeast as a sanctuary to escape military operations in India. In 2003 Bhutan launched a counterterrorism offensive and flushed out the Indian insurgents from its territory. In March 2008, the Bhutanese monarchy embraced democracy and elections were held for the 47-seat National Assembly, thereby delegating powers to the peoples' representatives to run the country. Under the head of state, King Jigme Kheshar Namgyel, who took over the reins from his father, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, in 2006, Bhutan faces no immediate terrorist threat to its security.

While most South Asian states have recorded improvements in terrorism trends, **Pakistan** continues to struggle with a deteriorating security situation. The killing of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, 150 kilometres from the capital, Islamabad, has put the Pakistan military in general, and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) agency in particular, under intense international scrutiny. The episode raised serious questions about the role of the military, which has its academy in Kakul, just 800 metres from where bin Laden had been allegedly living for many years. At present, trust between Pakistan and the US, especially between their intelligence agencies, is at its lowest point. Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Reza Gilani admitted in a recent interview with *Time* magazine that cooperation between the ISI and the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had broken down, raising questions about the future of the Pakistan–US relationship and US objectives in Afghanistan. He also argued that the rupture of the relationship with the US would prove fatal for Pakistan's fight against terrorism and militancy (Gilani 2011).

The Pakistani Defence Committee of the Cabinet, presided over by Prime Minister Gilani, has stated that 'security, defence and law-enforcement agencies will be authorised to use all means necessary to eliminate terrorists and militants.' The decision to eliminate all existing terrorist sanctuaries was taken after a series of revenge attacks on military installations by the Pakistani Taliban, otherwise known as the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). So far, more than 28 revenge attacks have been carried out by the TTP, leaving 157 people dead and more than 250 injured. Consistent with the pattern of small-unit attack scenarios discussed in Chapter 3, the TTP attacked the Pakistan naval base in Mehran in Karachi, waging a 17-hour gunbattle in which two P-3C Orion surveillance aircraft were gutted, four terrorists and 10 security personnel were killed and more than 20 people were injured. Separately, the TTP targeted Frontier Constabulary personnel in Charsadda, near Peshawar, in the first in the series of bin Laden revenge killings, in which 80 people, mostly Frontier Constabulary members, were killed and 115 injured. In October 2009, the Pakistan Army headquarters in Rawalpindi was also attacked by the militants; 22 people were killed, which raised serious concerns about the military's ability to safeguard its key installations. With the dramatic increase in terrorist attacks on military installations, international concerns about the safety of the Pakistani nuclear weapon arsenal have grown.

Since 2004, more than 34,000 people have been killed in Pakistan as a consequence of terrorist attacks. In 2010 alone, a total of 10,003 people were killed, slightly fewer that the record 12,623 in 2009 (Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies 2010).

Ironically, fewer people have been killed in the West by al-Qaeda and the Taliban than in Pakistan, where bin Laden's death triggered large-scale mourning and demonstrations organised by militant leaders, most notably Hafeez Saeed, the leader of *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (LeT).

The assassination of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer in January 2011 by his security guard for his remarks against state blasphemy laws indicates the extent to which extremist tendencies dominate contemporary Pakistani society.

Religious extremism continues unabated in Pakistan, where new hubs of jihadist recruitment have appeared in recent years. One such hub is South Punjab where the *Sipah e-Sahaba Pakistan*, *Jaish-e-Muhammad* and LeT terrorist groups have thrived for years. According to security analysts, between 5,000 and 9,000 militants from those groups are currently fighting in Afghanistan and Waziristan. There are 237 religious groups (such as Hanafi-Barelvi, Hanafi-Deobandi, Ahle-Hadith, and Shi'ite), including 82 sectarian and 24 political groups, in Pakistan. There are 104 jihadi-oriented groups and 18 of the Tableeghi persuasion. All of these groups run their own *madrassas* (boarding schools) to impart Islamic teaching to children, and many are considered hatcheries for the next generation of violent extremists. The flow of money for terrorist organisations in Pakistan continues, most of it from donations made during religious festivals (Stern 2000).

The sharp rise in extremism can be traced back to July 2007 military operations on the Red Mosque in Islamabad under General Pervez Musharraf, in which more than 100 people were killed, including several security personnel. The operation was launched to end a long siege of a nearby children's library by the female students of Jamia Hafsa (an affiliated *madrassa* of the mosque). After the crackdown, scores of mosques across the country were painted red in solidarity with the students and clerics killed in the operation.

Ideologically, differences between the Pakistani military and the Islamists emerged immediately after Pakistan's reluctant alliance with the US in the 'War on Terror', which compelled Musharraf to abandon the military's unofficial alliance with the *jihadis*. As a result, Musharraf and his corps commanders were repeatedly targeted by terrorist groups. Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the leader of the Jamaat-e-Ulema Islam group, said, 'The trained ones were later called terrorists while the ones who trained them were not bothered.'

In response, Pakistan has adopted the approach of seeking peace deals with the Taliban while simultaneously waging military offensives against those who refuse to negotiate. Pakistan has signed several peace deals with the Taliban, much to the dislike of the military, which complained that the deals allowed the Taliban to consolidate its position, rearm itself and gradually move into other areas, thereby neutralising any previous operational gains by the military. It's noteworthy that military operations in the Swat Valley were initiated when the Taliban violated a 2009 deal under which they were allowed to enforce *shari'a* in Swat, in lieu of a surrender of weapons and the cessation of hostilities. Instead, the Taliban continued to move towards Islamabad by capturing nearby towns, such as Buner.

In military terms, Pakistan has experienced mixed success against the Taliban at the cost of thousands of civilian and military lives. The first military operation to curb growing Taliban influence was launched in 2002 in North Waziristan and subsequently extended to other tribal agencies in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the provincially administered tribal area of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. There remain pockets in the tribal areas and Balochistan that have been untouched by the military, reportedly due to fears that intervention would ignite the already explosive security situation.

The two major power centres of the Taliban—the Haqqani network based in Miramshah, North Waziristan, and headed by Jalaluddin Haqqani, and the Quetta Shura (council), regarded as the Afghan Taliban's leadership group, based in Balochistan's capital and headed

by the Taliban supreme commander, Mullah Omar—have escaped this military offensive. The Quetta Shura has regional military shuras in Quetta, Peshawar, Miramshah in North Waziristan and Gerdi Jangal in Balochistan. The Haqqani network's operational bases are in Miramshah bazaar camp, Sarai Darpa Khel and Dabday Darpa Khel. Jalaluddin Haqqani's son, Sirajuddin Haqqani, handles the overall day-to-day operations of the network.

An Afghan news agency reported that, under US pressure, the ISI has approached the former ISI chief and Taliban sympathiser Lt General (ret.) Hamid Gul to urge Mullah Omar to leave Pakistan for Afghanistan or any third country. This shows the influence that the ISI still has on the Taliban through its serving and former operatives. Recent reports also revealed that the US favoured urging Pakistan to bring the Haqqani network into the mainstream of negotiations, lending credence to the established understanding that Pakistan enjoys strong linkages with the network and is reluctant to launch a military offensive against it in Miramshah for strategic reasons.

After bin Laden, the biggest concern for the Pakistan Government and the international community remains the linkages between the ISI, the military, the Taliban and al-Qaeda groups. The inner workings of the ISI have been under close scrutiny since Lt General Mehmud Ahmed, another ex-ISI chief, had reportedly directed the transfer of US$100,000 to the account of Muhammad Atta, one of the 9/11 terrorists in 2001. His alleged role in not pressing Mullah Omar sufficiently to hand over bin Laden to the US before the attack on Afghanistan led to his premature replacement by Lt General Ehsan ul Haq. Several subsequent incidents during the course of the war raised doubts about the sincerity of the ISI and the Pakistan Government in prosecuting the campaign, including the ISI's involvement in Daniel Pearl's killing, the mysterious escape of Egyptian militant al-Khadir, and reported cases of the Pakistani military allegedly fighting for the Taliban in Kabul and Kunduz.

As the war progressed, mistrust between the US and the ISI heightened, compelling President George W Bush in July 2008 to question who was controlling the ISI and pointing to the possibility that elements inside the ISI and the military were leaking information to the Taliban before drone attacks or military offensives. Prime Minister Gilani immediately put the ISI under the control of the Ministry of Interior in an effort to mute growing criticism of the agency. But the notification was reverted within a few hours, which only underlined the power that the ISI enjoyed in Pakistan.

Nonetheless, since 2004 growing mistrust between the US and Pakistan has led to increased CIA-operated Predator drone attacks against militants inside Pakistan. Between 2004 and 2010, 237 drone attacks killed around 2,290 people. The Pakistan Government faced political pressure from the Islamist parties and opposition over the perceived violation of the country's sovereignty in the attacks. Not surprisingly, diplomatic cables leaked by Wikileaks in late 2010 showed that the drone attacks had Gilani's approval, but that wasn't the government's public position.

So, where's Pakistan heading? Following bin Laden's discovery in Abbottabad, the already fragile relationship between the US and the ISI and the military may have reached breaking point, although both sides have shown optimism about continued engagement. The ISI chief, Lt General Ahmad Shuja Pasha, and the Pakistan Government have struggled to clarify their positions on bin Laden's compound.

In such a fluid situation, the testimony of David Coleman Headley couldn't have come at a more inopportune time. Headley, the co-accused in the 2008 Mumbai attacks, testified in

a US court that the ISI had planned the entire Mumbai operation in tandem with the LeT. Headley has implicated Major Iqbal of the ISI, LeT leader Hafiz Saeed, and Tahawwur Rana, a US-based Pakistani Canadian, in the Mumbai attacks, along with four others.

Pakistan is facing its greatest foreign policy and security challenges in 20 years and is likely to see the pattern of suicide attacks and bombings continue and probably increase. The government has expressed its resolve to eliminate all existing terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan, but the decades-long linkages between the *jihadis* and their handlers in the Pakistani military establishment won't disappear overnight. Muhammad Amir Rana, author of several important works on extremism in Pakistan, argues that:

> As the modern Jihadi culture was created, nurtured and groomed in Pakistan, its effect on the many senior people involved in that process, coupled with the massive public support which was state sponsored, should not be underestimated. The psychological trauma involved in changing sides cannot easily be washed off ... The jihadis have many supporters in Pakistan's army and secret services. It is extremely unlikely that none of them would be 'helping out' their former friends and allies (Rana 2005).

Other experts on Pakistan lend support to those judgements. Bruce Riedel, a former CIA officer and adviser to four US presidents on South Asian issues, puts the case most starkly: 'the future of the global jihad will be decided in Pakistan more than anywhere else in the world' (Riedel 2011).

Press reports also show that Pakistan–China relations have strengthened since bin Laden's death, marking a significant shift in the geopolitics of the region. Pakistan–China military cooperation in Gilgit and Baltistan and along the Karakoram highway has intensified, and Pakistan has also offered to allow China to open a naval base in Balochistan. In the years ahead, as the US–Pakistan relationship struggles to recover, Pakistan will be drawn closer to China—which will worry both the US and India. Moreover, just as the Haqqani network has been deemed to be a strategic asset for Pakistan, groups such as LeT, Jaish-e-Muhammad and Harkat ul-Mujahideen (HuM) will continue to thrive, meaning that the jihadist and terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan is there to stay.

North Africa and the Middle East

As the al-Qaeda core in Pakistan faces a period of sustained internal and external pressure, affiliates in North Africa and the Middle East have grown stronger. The ideology of violent jihadism continues to win new converts, as groups such as al-Shabaab in Somalia gain international attention and attract overseas recruits. Increasingly, foreign fighters who have spent time in Afghanistan and Pakistan are being drawn back to this region, lured by the combination of political instability, weak central governments and a sense that it is both the historical and future battleground of the global jihad.

Yemen remains a country facing civil war. In addition to the Houthi rebellion in the north and a secessionist movement in the south, the current government faces sustained domestic resistance from violent Islamists, led by the cleric and former bin Laden mentor, Abdul Majid al Zindani. President Saleh spent several months in Saudi Arabia following a June 2011 suicide attack at a mosque, in which he and several senior government officials were injured. Although Prime Minister Ali Mujawar returned to the capital in August, and Saleh returned in September, there's no functioning government in many parts of Yemen and little prospect that the political situation will improve in the short term. The removal of the current government will only create further political unrest.

AQAP has successfully exploited this political turmoil to pursue its own objectives and to solidify its position. Although recent AQAP plots (such as the 2009 Christmas Day 'underwear' bombing and the 2010 printer cartridge bombing) failed, the heightened tempo of activity has given AQAP more credibility among radical Islamists worldwide. The attention it's received in the Western media is replicated in *jihadi* forums and via online content. Just as bin Laden was able to draw international support and patronage towards al-Qaeda in the aftermath of the 2001 attacks, AQAP has shown that, for the *jihadi* community at least, action produces a cycle of recruitment and respect.

Islamic extremist groups in Yemen are unlikely to topple the government on their own. They lack the resources and organisational coherence to take over the state. However, recent terrorist attacks against the Yemeni Government (in more than 100 separate incidents in 2011 alone) demonstrate the ongoing challenge posed by those groups.

AQAP has intensified its operations in recent years, using Yemeni, Western and Saudi operatives under a common banner. The group clearly intends to serve as a hub for regional operations targeting local governments and Western interests in Yemen and neighbouring Saudi Arabia. As a logistical base, Yemen provides al-Qaeda with several geographical advantages: it has access to important maritime choke points in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, and weapons and explosives from Yemen have been used to attack Western diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia.

But it's the growing international reach of AQAP as an organisation that most concerns Western counterterrorism officials. In his testimony before the US Congress in 2009, Michael Leiter, director of the National Counterterrorism Center, stated that 'we are concerned that if AQAP strengthens, al-Qaeda leaders could use the group and the growing presence of foreign fighters in the region to supplement its transnational operations capability' (Agence France-Presse 2009). Since then, the threat has only intensified. The director of the CIA, David Petraeus, told a congressional hearing in September 2011 that 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, has emerged as the most dangerous regional node in the global jihad.'

Anwar al-Awlaki's death following a US drone strike in northern Yemen in September 2011 (the first such attack against a US citizen) has removed another key leadership figure from the al-Qaeda hierarchy. Al-Awlaki's death—alongside that of another American citizen, Samir Khan, the publisher of *Inspire* magazine—has silenced an important voice in al-Qaeda's propaganda campaign against the West. However, with more than 200 radical clerics in Yemen alone, that message is larger than any one individual.

In neighbouring **Somalia**, the rise of the al-Shabaab youth group and its close affiliation with AQAP further complicates Western counterterrorism efforts. For several years after the North African famine in the 1990s, intelligence analysts had considered Somalia to be a fundamentally inhospitable place for foreign jihadist groups, but the terrorist threat has grown in direct proportion to the intrusiveness of foreign powers in the country.

Al-Shabaab emerged as a militant youth wing of the Islamic Courts Union, a group that controlled much of the country before the December 2006 invasion by Ethiopian forces. The occupation was meant to oust the Islamic Courts Union and to prop up the administration of the Transitional Federal Government. However, the action had a number of unintended consequences. According to experts on Somalia, the US-backed occupation fuelled anti-American sentiment in the country and encouraged *jihadis* from the Middle East and Southeast Asia to join with al-Shabaab in the insurgency (Burton 2009). The

foreign fighters brought with them sophisticated new tactics, such as remote-controlled detonations and suicide operations. By the time Ethiopian forces withdrew in 2009, al-Shabaab's influence had grown and its international linkages had been strengthened.

Today, al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda are said to be cooperating closely in the administration of jihadist training camps in southern Somalia. Some of the camps provide basic ideological indoctrination and low-level infantry skills to Somali militia members fighting against the local government; however, other camps are providing more sophisticated training in guerrilla warfare, explosives and assassination. The latter have become magnets for many from Somali diaspora communities in the West, wanting to participate in the global jihadist struggle and to potentially bring the fight back to Western populations. Dozens of Australian, American and Swedish citizens have already participated in the training camps, and several plots have been uncovered as a result, including in Australia. As pro-al-Shabaab refugees in Western countries continue to recruit actively among the diaspora communities, the threat to Western security interests increases.

According to ASPI's recent research, al-Qaeda's two regional affiliates—al-Shabaab and AQAP—are beginning to work more closely together, and not just with the al-Qaeda core in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Khalil 2011). Although evidence of a coordinated campaign between militant groups in Yemen and Somalia is patchy and incomplete, elements in both countries share the same extremist ideology, and geographical proximity allows them to cooperate and coordinate plans.

Concerns have also been raised about the porous border between Somalia and Djibouti. In addition to the daily flow of refugees seeking to escape the violence in Somalia, a significant number of Western passport holders, including Americans and Australians, have tried to cross illegally into Somalia. Border officials suspect that some of these individuals are attempting to join al-Shabaab training camps in southern Somalia, and several arrests have been made as they transit the region.

The options available to Western policymakers to counter the growing terrorist threat across Northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are limited. Like Hamas in the Gaza Strip, al-Shabaab combines violent militancy with a range of social services, including education, welfare and food distribution. The group enjoys strong community support as a result. And, although efforts have been made to improve military and intelligence cooperation with the Yemeni Government, the political situation in Sanaa precludes a more productive relationship. The lack of infrastructure and sustainable systems of government in Yemen and Somalia will constrain any external efforts to disrupt these emerging terrorist networks.

However, doing nothing isn't an option. North Africa is now al-Qaeda's new base. As in Pakistan and Afghanistan, targeted strikes on terrorist leaders and training camps by unmanned aircraft have become the primary instrument in the Obama administration's counterterrorism toolkit. Led by the CIA, MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper drone strikes have increased rapidly in the past three years, rising from 33 in 2008 to more than 100 in 2010. Their effectiveness has been questioned by some country experts, who argue that additional air strikes will only force more of the local population towards militant groups for protection. Others have questioned the legality and legitimacy of drone strikes outside the 'hot' conflict zones of Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, the lack of alternatives compels Western governments to maintain pressure on al-Qaeda affiliate organisations. Decapitation is a crude instrument but, as the bin Laden case showed, it can be effective in removing leaders and thereby undermining the group as a whole.

A series of 42 coordinated attacks across Baghdad and surrounding provinces in **Iraq** in August 2011 demonstrated most clearly the ability of al-Qaeda affiliates to reorganise and regroup under conditions of intense pressure. Until recently, the Iraqi security services had dismissed the threat from Al-Qaeda in Iraq, believing that the Sunni insurgency was crippled and that the group lacked the capabilities and personnel to conduct major operations. Throughout 2010, US and Iraqi forces had killed or arrested 34 of 42 senior al-Qaeda militants under Operation Breaking Dawn.

According to the Iraqi Interior Minister for Intelligence, however, the 2011 attacks are the work of a third generation of al-Qaeda fighters in Iraq, many of whom had previously spent time in US prisons (El Gamal 2011). The tactics of armed groups linked to al-Qaeda now include raiding provincial councils, attacking highways between Iraq and its neighbours, kidnapping police patrols and extorting money from local businesses. The northern city of Mosul and the nearby Salahuddin and Diyala provinces remain central hotspots for al-Qaeda operations. And the insurgency continues to gain strength in Baghdad and nearby southern districts, where Al-Qaeda in Iraq has taken to distributing recruitment leaflets to the general population and to calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq.

Southeast Asia

In Southeast Asia, the organised structure of jihadist terrorism of just a few years ago has splintered and fractured under the weight of regional and Western counterterrorism responses. Although previous al-Qaeda associates in the region, such as Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayyaf group, have shown limited connectivity to emerging al-Qaeda factions overseas and no longer pose a significant transnational threat, the infrastructure of terrorism in Southeast Asia continues to be an ongoing challenge to regional governments. The 2010 discovery of a 300-strong training camp in the northern Indonesian province of Aceh highlighted both the lack of organisational coherence among the various extremist factions and the continuing threat from fringe elements within the broader jihadist community.

The remnants of the old JI organisation in Indonesia have been significantly weakened since the last major attack on Western interests in Jakarta in 2009. Although these groups engaged in two suicide attacks in 2011 alone (one against a police mosque in Cirebon in April and the other in September at a Christian church in Semarang), they have clearly become more inwardly focused. The current strategy of attacking the apparatus of the Indonesian state, especially the police and security services, mirrors the pattern of ethno-religious violence in both southern Thailand and the southern Philippines, but that could change. The emergence in 2008 of a new organisation, *Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid* (under the leadership of the former JI emir, Abu Bakar Bashir) and its pivotal role in the Aceh training camp highlight the unpredictable nature of jihadist terrorism in the region and its potential for renewal and regeneration.

There's no evidence and little expectation that the current Southeast Asian terrorist organisations have either the operational desire or the organisational capacity to link up with al-Qaeda groups elsewhere. Although the Malaysian terrorist planner, Noordin Mohammed Top, made several attempts to reach out to al-Qaeda central before his death in Indonesia in 2009, there's no suggestion that his effort was reciprocated. The trial of another former JI leader, Umar Patek, following his 2011 arrest in Pakistan, may begin to shed more light on the current state of linkages between Southeast Asia and the global jihadist movement.

Chapter 5

TERRORIST INNOVATION AND METHODS

Potential terrorist uses of unconventional weapons and methods, including chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons, will remain an acute security concern for Western policymakers. The increasing availability of materials and technical knowledge through the internet, combined with al-Qaeda's motivation for spectacular mass-casualty attacks, contributed to an assessment after 9/11 that terrorists networks are, in the words of former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, 'inevitably going to get their hands on [weapons of mass destruction], and they would not hesitate to use them'. But there's a great deal of misdiagnosis regarding the drivers of terrorist innovation and the current nature of the threat from CBRN terrorism.

Past form

Given the demonstrated capacity of sub-state actors to employ non-conventional weapons and tactics, such as the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo cult's use of chemical and biological weapons in the 1990s or the anthrax letters used against political and media targets in the US in the immediate aftermath of the 2001 al-Qaeda attacks, it would be imprudent to discount the possibility of this kind of terrorism re-emerging in the future. However, the technical difficulties of acquiring and weaponising such substances and then disseminating the weapons are the same ones that ultimately led the major powers to walk away from offensive military programs in chemical and biological weapons in the 1950s and 1960s.

It's true that the information revolution has increased public knowledge about these types of weapons. The CIA has noted that more than 40 terrorist organisations have taken at least some modest steps towards acquiring a CBRN capability. However, as yet, no terrorist group

has mastered the complex technical and scientific difficulties to achieve a CBRN capability that would match the lethality of previous conventional plots.

The development of an offensive chemical or biological capability, let alone a nuclear capability, is much harder than the popular literature suggests, and involves much more than simply purchasing commercially available materials and employing people with basic skills in chemistry or biology. Despite assets of over $1 billion, the employment of several qualified scientists over many years and little or no scrutiny from law enforcement agencies, Aum Shinrikyo's chemical attack in the Tokyo subway lacked sophistication and killed only 13 people.

That said, even a low-grade chemical or biological attack using a simple method of dispersal would have a disproportionate psychological impact on the public. And, as the revelations of the AQ Khan network in Pakistan showed, there's ample evidence of a global black market in CBRN materials. So, for intelligence agencies around the world, the net assessment of the CBRN threat remains 'possible but not probable'.

The unknown factor in this equation remains the potential for state-sponsored terrorism using unconventional weapons. Most active terrorist organisations in the Middle East receive some form of direct or indirect support from states. Iran, for example, continues to provide direct military assistance to both Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and al-Qaeda received assistance from the Sudanese Government and from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan throughout the 1990s. Moreover, in recent years, both Iran and Syria have pursued a proliferation strategy that includes a nascent nuclear program, and both are suspected of retaining some capability to produce chemical and biological weapons.

Most analysts tend to dismiss the possibility that any one of these states would either give or sell a CBRN capability to a terrorist organisation.

Most analysts tend to dismiss the possibility that any one of these states would either give or sell a CBRN capability to a terrorist organisation. The likelihood of a massive retaliatory strike on the state, or that the terrorist group itself might use the weapon against that country, is believed to have provided a sufficient 'deterrent' effect against CBRN sponsorship to date. However, al-Qaeda continues to operate in environments where political stability is at its weakest, and where governments are most vulnerable to terrorist insurgency. Under such conditions, marshalling the resources of a state—including national technological capabilities, scientific expertise, territorial sanctuary and sources of funding—will remain a central goal for the al-Qaeda network as it expands its operations in such places as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen.

Continuity of tactics

Continuity is, by far, the most common feature of terrorist weapons and tactics. Methods that have been used for decades or even centuries are still employed today. Beheadings and knife attacks, for example, are some of the oldest recorded terrorist techniques and are used frequently in places such as Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Over the past few decades, the most dominant forms of terrorist violence have used just two simple methods—gun attacks and bombings.

Whether swords, guns or bombs, these weapons are clearly identifiable as the tools of armed conflict, and the AK-47 rifle remains the iconic weapon of jihadists around the world. This propensity for physical violence and the symbolism of engaging in a legitimate armed conflict are critical factors in assessing terrorists' innovation.

Terrorists have often matched the low-end weapons and tactics used by the military groups they oppose. Although guns require a different set of skills from swords, and bombs require an even greater adaption of technique, they are part of the same continuity of organised violence, so most terrorist innovation is in the specifics—newer guns, more sophisticated bomb-making materials and alternative methods of disguising explosive devices.

Often, especially in relation to bomb-making skills, those innovations are the result of necessity, not ingenuity. As counterterrorism methods advance, so too do terrorist techniques. The use of more advanced triggering and concealment techniques, such as barometric triggers, timers and radio triggers, is part of the constant evolution of measure and countermeasure.

Although the use of simple weapons is universal, their tactical application can vary from group to group. The choice of weapon is often influenced by the terrorist's motives and goals. Assassinations, sabotage, hijackings and suicide attacks are the most common methods used by various terrorist organisations. And a group's tactics tend to shift when their strategy changes. While strategy remains constant, the same 'tried and true' tactical methods are generally used. In short, terrorists tend not to innovate and are generally unlikely to adopt radically new methods.

One area of possible terrorist innovation involves the use of cyber technologies. Cyberattacks could be used to cause indirect physical damage to critical infrastructure (by disrupting air traffic control systems, for example) or in conjunction with a traditional attack (by disrupting emergency response mechanisms). This form of attack would increase the psychological effects of a physical attack by exploiting our fear of societal vulnerability. That fear arises from our modern dependence on computer technologies and information systems. It would be possible for terrorists to disrupt critical infrastructure, such as power grids and financial services, for the purposes of causing mass panic and political unrest.

Yet terrorists will continue to favour direct action. Despite the chaos and fear that would result from the disruption of a government computer network, the stock market or other online services, the physical destruction and visible death from a simple nitrate bomb would have a greater and longer lasting psychological effect, particularly in countries that aren't accustomed to terrorism, such as Australia.

Chapter 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA'S COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

As a postmodern, global ideology, 'al-Qaedaism' isn't in recession. Previous counterterrorism strategies that focused on defeating al-Qaeda's organisational hubs and spokes using kinetic means have been critical in degrading the top leadership ranks, but have missed the more important goal of defeating the ideas that foment and promote extremist violence around the world.

An effective counterterrorism strategy for Australia and its international partners must continue to put pressure on the various al-Qaeda nodes in Southeast Asia, South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, but it must also look beyond those particular organisations. Lessons learned from previous counterterrorism and counterinsurgency campaigns provide only limited guidance in constructing a more effective long-term strategy. Western governments must begin this task by addressing threats likely to be posed by future generations of terrorists.

As the threat evolves, it requires a response that's simultaneously global and local. At the broadest level, Western counterterrorism strategy must focus on breaking the cycle of terrorist recruitment and replenishment that's both sustained al-Qaeda's core command structure in Pakistan and led to the formation of new al-Qaeda affiliates around the world. The current US strategy of building a network of air bases in Ethiopia, Djibouti and the Seychelles from which to launch drone strikes on selected targets across Africa and the Arabian Peninsula is a necessary but insufficient component of a more comprehensive counterterrorism plan (Washington Post 2011b).

The concept of violent jihad—a distortion of the original Koranic ideal of personal struggle—is the ideological glue that binds this global movement together despite its diverse ethnic membership, historical differences and geographical separation. The requirement to engage

in jihad, both individually and as a group, is repeated endlessly in video- and audio-tapes by al-Zawahiri and other senior al-Qaeda leaders, on a growing number of jihadist websites, and by radical clerics speaking in mosques or addressing informal private gatherings.

...the critical variable in determining whether one individual will turn to extremism and violence and another will not is how they interpret these messages.

But the critical variable in determining whether one individual will turn to extremism and violence and another will not is how they interpret these messages. Interviews conducted in the Indonesian prison system during 2010 showed that, for members of the Jemaah Islamiyah organisation, the main factor that influences violent action is the individual's personal interpretation of what constitutes a legitimate *medan jihad* (jihad battlefield) (Ungerer 2011). Individual militants conceptualise the battlefield space (and who should occupy it) in different ways. For most militants, especially in places such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Afghanistan, the legitimacy of the battlefield extends only to their immediate geographical location. A very small number of individuals, perhaps fewer than 1,000 people worldwide, conceptualise the battlefield in terms of an ongoing, global struggle between Islam and the West *and* have the power and influence to compel others to commit violence. It's on those individuals that we should focus the next stage of our counterterrorism efforts.

The primary focus of Australia's counterterrorism and counter-radicalisation efforts must now shift towards the three areas most at risk from the influence of 'al-Qaedaism'— individuals, institutions and the internet.

Focus on the individuals

Affiliate organisations have adopted the al-Qaeda 'brand' for reasons of prestige, potential funding and a sense of being part of a broader global jihadist movement. Before his death in 2009, Noordin Mohammed Top, the Malaysian JI member responsible for, among others, the attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, had begun calling his small band of followers 'Al-Qaeda in the Malay Archipelago' or 'Al-Qaeda on the Veranda of Mecca' (a reference to Aceh). But the al-Qaeda leadership never formally sanctioned such an alliance, and Top remained on the fringes of the jihadist community. His real influence was in interpreting and articulating al-Qaeda's violent message to Southeast Asian audiences.

In counterterrorism strategy, there's an important distinction to be made between the threat posed by leaders such as Noordin Top and that posed by the various foot soldiers who, for reasons of misadventure, malfeasance or just plain ignorance, constitute the broader support network. Although convicted on terrorism-related charges, individuals like Harri Setya Rachmadi and Sonhadi are serving jail sentences in Indonesia for unwittingly helping Top evade authorities by providing him with accommodation and safe passage. At interview, both said that that they had no idea whom they were harbouring, and they weren't members of the formal JI organisation. Differences in how individuals joined such

organisations, and the specific roles they played inside the groups, offer important lessons in how to design and implement more nuanced counter-radicalisation programs.

Moreover, as the tactical shift towards the promotion of individual jihad or 'freelance' *mujahidin* continues, distinguishing between individuals and organisations will become a more critical component of the overall counterterrorism effort. A key challenge for the Australian Government is to understand the pace and trajectory of radicalisation and recruitment among 'at-risk' individuals living in Australia.

Individualising the global jihadist movement offers Western counterterrorism officials the opportunity to identify the key leaders and separate them from their constituents. It paints al-Qaeda not as a monolithic, coherent organisation at the vanguard of a global jihadist insurgency, but as a loose and often fractious network of individuals, many of whom are in direct competition with each other over the future ideological and strategic directions of the al-Qaeda brand. Exploiting those differences is the key. And more effort must be made to disconnect al-Qaeda's meta-narrative of a war between 'Islam' and the 'West' from the specific local grievances that fuel jihadist violence in places like Mindanao, the southern provinces of Thailand, Kashmir and the Horn of Africa.

Make institutions a higher priority

For several decades, radical Islamist groups in the West have been effective in exploiting Muslim community organisations, sympathetic mosques, prayer groups, schools and universities in order to construct what David Kilcullen calls 'micro-havens'—urban underground movements, alienated ethnic enclaves and isolated gangs—that are sometimes used to recruit individuals to terrorist activity (Kilcullen 2007).

...any tolerance of subversive elements within local institutions threatens the contribution that community groups can make to society, and potentially exposes individuals to radicalising influences that may lead to extremism and violence.

To date, Australian governments at both the state and federal levels have done a good job in responding to such networks through initiatives such as community policing and engagement strategies. However, any tolerance of subversive elements within local institutions threatens the contribution that community groups can make to society, and potentially exposes individuals to radicalising influences that may lead to extremism and violence.

In his speech to the University of Adelaide in September 2011, the Director-General of ASIO, David Irvine, described the internal nature of the threat in the following terms:

> [S]mall numbers of Australians have absorbed the ideology of violent religious extremism and have planned or are contemplating and planning acts of terrorism in Australia or overseas. This home-grown brand of terrorism, involving mostly young Australians who have been 'radicalised' either by Australian extremists or by overseas inspiration, requires constant vigilance (Irvine 2011).

As part of a broader counter-extremism agenda, the Australian Government should assist community groups to focus on indoctrination in schools, university clubs and other institutions in order to build greater community resilience to extremism. Such an approach would be more credible and effective if the threatened communities exposed subversive elements within their own ranks themselves. Among other things, it would avoid the perception that the state was interfering in any way with religious beliefs.

Remove the online sanctuary

In order to facilitate the global Islamist insurgency and its appeal, its strategists have exploited the technology and infrastructure of global connectivity. According to one study, there are now more than 5,000 active terrorist websites worldwide, many of them hosted on servers in the US. ASPI's study of internet radicalisation in Southeast Asia found that the terrorist presence on the internet there has evolved rapidly from the computer hacking and bomb-making manuals of a few years ago towards more sophisticated and heavily encrypted social-networking sites in which potential recruits are identified, groomed and radicalised in local languages. And the introduction of sophisticated online material in English, such as *Inspire* magazine, is a deliberate effort to target vulnerable individuals in the West. According to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, children as young as 14 are being radicalised after viewing such material online.

The increasing sophistication and speed of transmission provided by the internet, including on mobile devices, is likely to continue to fuel global terrorist propaganda—possibly in regions that were previously believed to be immune from such messages—as the internet becomes available to more users in more countries. Social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube are now widely used by terrorist groups and supporters to incite violence and to connect instantly to wider audiences.

Australia, like other Western countries, has introduced new policies on countering violent extremism (CVE), including efforts to limit terrorist propaganda on the internet and to promote more positive online content. A central plank of the Australian Government's CVE initiative is a new CVE website, *Resilient communities*, which aims to publish counter-narratives that address violent extremism and to provide a space for dialogue on issues related to terrorism.

But the ease of access to violent extremist material around the world and the lack of uniform legislative control means that an online approach that focuses only on 'soft' countermessaging will not prevent material being used for radicalisation.

...there's now a strong case to be made to ban all al-Qaeda material online and to 'take down' all terrorist websites wherever they appear.

In terms of counterterrorism policy, there's now a strong case to be made to ban all al-Qaeda material online and to 'take down' all terrorist websites wherever they appear. Such actions would need to be coordinated among like-minded countries and would require the cooperation

of telecommunications companies and internet service providers. There's no expectation that the material wouldn't find its way on to other websites, but the simple act of removing it every time it's presented will complicate al-Qaeda's propaganda campaign, increase its costs of doing business, and ultimately send a message that violent extremist material is abhorrent in all its forms. The growing risks of internet radicalisation, especially among vulnerable youth in the West, now outweigh both the argument of security agencies in favour of monitoring online material for intelligence purposes, and the civil libertarian argument concerning free speech.

Conclusion

Terrorism is the use of political violence to create fear. Its purpose is to shape politics, but its targets are often civilian populations. As a tactic of low-intensity, asymmetric conflict, terrorism has been used for centuries to frustrate enemies, to frighten civilian populations and to force political reforms. It has rarely worked, but despite its apparent futility it's now a persistent and permanent feature of our contemporary security landscape. A decade ago, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, former CIA analyst Paul Pillar wrote that 'terrorism cannot be defeated—only reduced, attenuated, and to some degree controlled' (Pillar 2001).

The ultimate goal of counterterrorism policing and intelligence, therefore, must be to reduce the risk of further terrorist attacks by draining the ideological swamp from which emerge notions that violence in support of religious goals is an acceptable and worthwhile course of political action.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
ASIO	Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation
CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CVE	countering violent extremism
HuM	Harkat ul-Mujahideen
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
LeT	Lashkar-e-Toiba
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan

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Beyond bin Laden
Future trends in terrorism

This *Strategy* report examines the shifting patterns of global terrorism. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the geographic, operational and ideological trends that are driving the current wave of jihadist terrorism around the world. In the wake of Osama bin Laden's death, those trends point to the increasing diversification of the threat, as a new generation of terrorist leaders in South Asia, North Africa and the Arabian peninsula adapt and reinterpret al-Qaeda's ideology.

The report argues that with or without al-Qaeda as a coherent organisation at the forefront of the global Islamist movement, religiously-motivated terrorism is set to continue for many decades to come. Despite the obvious splintering and factionalisation within al-Qaeda and between al-Qaeda and its various franchises and affiliates around the world, there is little evidence that 'al-Qaedaism' as a motivating ideology is going to dissolve any time soon. Although many contemporary jihadist groups, especially in Southeast Asia, reject al-Qaeda's methods, and most appear disconnected from the current Egyptian- and Saudi-dominated al-Qaeda leadership, the local and global manifestations of Islamist terrorism are in fact converging.

For Australia, these trends will require a more agile and effective counter-terrorism response. In particular, counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation strategies will need to focus more closely on those areas at home that are most at risk from the spread of 'al-Qaedaism'—individuals, institutions and the internet.

The report is authored by Carl Ungerer, Director of ASPI's National Security Program.