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# To what extent was Western intelligence at fault in failing to indentify the nature of the terrorist threat before 9/11 and its aftermath?

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## Resumen

Reflexionando sobre la extensa literatura e investigación sobre fallos de inteligencia y especialmente aquellos que sucedieron tras los ataques terroristas del 9/11 en EE.UU., Indonesia y Europa, este análisis concluye que la inteligencia, particularmente la inteligencia occidental, no puede ser totalmente responsable por errar en la apropiada identificación y alertar sobre el advenimiento de hechos de discontinuidad histórica. Las graves repercusiones sufridas en la capacidad analítica de la inteligencia estratégica reflejan errores y ausencias en la planificación y ejecución a largo plazo en la gestión, tanto de legisladores occidentales como de consejeros económicos, así como la de elites socio-económicas, a lo largo de los años 1980 y 1990. La incapacidad para proyectar hechos de discontinuidad histórica continúa siendo un elemento de inteligencia y política que necesita mayor revisión.

**Palabras clave:** Inteligencia, Islam, Errores de discurso, Terrorismo.

## Abstract

In reflecting on the extensive literature and research on intelligence failures and particularly that which ensued in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, Indonesia and those in Europe, this analysis concludes that intelligence, and particularly Western intelligence, cannot be completely at fault for the failure to identify appropriately and forewarn about the occurrence of historical discontinuity events. Western policymakers, economic advisers, as well as socio-economic elites' performance throughout the 1980s and 1990s reveals flaws in long-term policy planning and decision-making with serious repercussions for strategic intelligence analysis. The inability to forecast historical discontinuity events is a key element of intelligence and policy which needs further revision.

**Key Words:** Intelligence, Islam, discourse failure, terrorism

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*When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion, creatures bristling with prejudice, and motivated by pride and **vanity**.*

—Dale Carnegie

**M**uch truth rests in the Baconian maxim ‘knowledge is power’. In the field of intelligence knowledge is power insofar as such power is applied ‘on the basis of brevity, timeliness and relevance *in that order* [italics in original].’<sup>1</sup> Before 9/11, however, relevant intelligence, for whatever reason, did not register in policymakers’ agendas. While identification of the nature of a threat is an important piece of the intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination process *it is not enough* to counter a threat. Was this the case before 9/11? To what extent was then Western intelligence at fault in failing to identify the nature of the terrorist threat before 9/11 and its aftermath? The following analysis demonstrates that while some sociologists, political scientists and intelligence services clearly identified the nature of the evolving terrorist threats before 9/11 and in the broader post-Cold War world era, they failed to persuade policymakers of the impact and danger religious inspired terrorism and particularly, terrorism inspired by the radicalization and politicization of Muslims world-wide, would bare upon the security of their own nations and to the maintenance of international peace and security. In other words, there was a failure of intelligence to bring to relevance an intelligence discourse that had identified this as the main threat. This was to become the basis for the failure to forecast a *historical discontinuity* event. In order to address this claim this study discusses the literature of intelligence failure and explains from a theoretical point of view what type of intelligence failure 9/11 represents. In light of the different nature of the failure to predict and prevent the 9/11 terrorist attacks when compared to other intelligence failures, it is important to understand arguments evaluating methodological approaches as well as relevant cognitive barriers plaguing intelligence analysts’, as well as policymakers’ qualitative, predictive analyses and interaction. This may only be assimilated appropriately when contextualizing the relevance of the main international events unfolding as well as sociological shifts taking place in the pre-9/11 world and how these relate to the evolution of the nature of the terrorist threat. Further, political scientists, politicians and sociologists’ perceptions of how these events shaped the nature of the evolving terrorist threat or developed alongside it influenced Western intelligence analyses and decision-making processes responsible for a breakdown in the intelligence cycle, which reflected a certain degree of complacency, arrogance or something else within the intelligence community. These dynamics prevented Western intelligence services from effecting appropriate preventive countermeasures.

But the extent to which Western intelligence was at fault for failing to identify the nature of the terrorist threat before 9/11 and its aftermath bares relevance with a philosophical dilemma that has not been presented clearly or effectively in the intelligence literature post-9/11. This dilemma is related to the philosophical precepts that underpin Western economic and technological modernism along with its inherent and paradigmatic

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur S. Hulnick ‘The Intelligence Producer-Consumer Linkage’, *Intelligence & National Security*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1986), p. 227

contradictions and their impact upon societies, and in particular, Muslim societies. In other words, what we commonly call globalization. Globalization is not necessarily a wholly new phenomenon as it has existed for centuries. 'Nevertheless, and most commentators appear to agree, late twentieth century globalization does seem different from earlier forms in certain important respects'.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this analysis is not intended to question or qualify the rationale behind globalization in any respect, but merely analyze its impact and contribution in shaping the nature of the evolving terrorist threat while explaining its connection to the extent of failure on behalf of Western intelligence to identify it before 9/11 and whether, in fact, such failure existed. A starting point in this analysis should therefore be the identification of the key players within the Western intelligence community responsible for analyses of security threats; policymakers; intelligence officers; and, to a certain extent, members of the academic community specializing in related disciplines such as international relations, political science, Middle Eastern studies, strategic studies, sociology and most importantly, terrorism studies. Some writers and students of intelligence have argued that part of the failure to forecast 9/11 lied within the academic field, considering this community's unique qualifications to forecast historical trends.<sup>3</sup> While some truth certainly exists in this premise it fails to realize that, unfortunately, the forecasting of threats to national security is ultimately and exclusively, the responsibility of policymakers and intelligence analysts, to which only a few in academia have access. In addition, expert consulting as a result of the identification of a threat, from those in academia who do have access and may therefore provide qualitative predictive analyses, may not be heeded should such advice not fall within policymakers' intelligence requirements. Political immobilism with regard to intelligence and threats to security inevitably translated into *discourse failure*. This instance was to become the main cause for the failure to analyze appropriately changing historical trends. This analysis argues that this was the key factor causing *historical discontinuity failure*. It is for this reason that the study of intelligence in today's world is so much more relevant than before. The benefit of hindsight in the study of intelligence will reveal flaws in long-term policy planning and decision-making.

The primary aim of this analysis is to raise much needed awareness in the intelligence and policy fields with regard to the critical value of political intelligence and how this needs to be both incorporated and appreciated by intelligence officials as well as by policymakers into longer-term intelligence planning and forecasting in order to convey a clear understanding of both the forces and the trends evolving in the socio-politic, economic and techno-military fields so as to provide policymakers with intelligence they should act on in a timely fashion to change the way potentially threatening events evolve in order to prevent them from affecting the security of their nations. This review is not intended to use hindsight to pass judgment on those responsible for national security. However, reflecting on these instances should be equally important, not only for intelligence services, but especially for policymakers and their entourages, who are responsible for decisions (and lack of them thereof) affecting the security of their citizens, to pay more careful attention to the bigger picture in order to better prioritize their nation's security agenda.

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', *Public Culture* (2) 2: 1-24 (1990), in Ahmed, Akbar S. & Donnan Hastings, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 3

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Monica Czwarno, 'Misjudging Islamic Terrorism: the Academic Community's failure to Predict 9/11', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 7 (October 1, 2006), pp. 657-658

***The literature of intelligence failure: 9/11, what type of failure?***

One problem in the study of intelligence failures, as Richard Russell asserts, is that '[t]oo much of the growing body of intelligence literature restricts itself to the inside workings [and obstacles] of the intelligence process as if intelligence was an end in and of itself and ignores the role of intelligence in informing presidential decision making, which is the ultimate end of strategic intelligence'.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Woodrow Kuhns rightly notes that '[t]he study of intelligence failures is perhaps the most academically advanced field in the study of intelligence'.<sup>5</sup> In this process much of the focus in the literature of intelligence failure has focused almost exclusively on those intelligence estimates that failed to predict a military surprise attack. Some commonly studied military intelligence failures are those that involved failure to adopt appropriate countermeasures at Pearl Harbor in 1941 or the lack of readiness on behalf of the Soviet Union in the wake of the German Operation Barbarossa in September 1941, or the failure to forecast the deployment of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba in 1962. Some commentators might also note the failure of the CIA to forecast the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, an exhaustive review conducted by Berkowitz and Richelson concluded that 'throughout the 1980s the intelligence community warned of the weakening of the soviet economy, and, later, of the impending fall of Gorbachev and the breakup of the Soviet Union'.<sup>6</sup> While the mainstream media and even some experts compared the failure to forecast the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US to past intelligence failures, singularly, that on Pearl Harbor, Fred Borch disagreed. For Borch

the nature of that failure was quite different: the American commanders in Hawaii in 1941 had sufficient information justifying a higher state of vigilance, while those safeguarding U.S. airlines, the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon did not. Similarly, while both events can be said to reflect American "unpreparedness," the character of that lack of readiness is strikingly dissimilar: 7 December involves military unreadiness while 11 September does not.<sup>7</sup>

Essentially, the main difference was the civilian nature of attacker and target on 9/11 and that of military adversary and military target at Pearl Harbor. Similar types of longer-term *strategic intelligence* estimates that failed, however, at predicting an event involving *historical discontinuity* appear to be not only less commonly studied, but also poorly understood. Some commonly known *historical discontinuity* failures are those involving failure at forecasting the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, Qadhafi's rise to power in 1970, the Soviet invasion of

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<sup>4</sup> Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 22

<sup>5</sup> Woodrow J. Kuhns in Richard K. Betts & Thomas G. Mahnken, eds. *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in honor of Michael I. Handel* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 80

<sup>6</sup> Bruce D. Berkowitz & Jeffrey T. Richelson, 'The CIA Vindicated', *The National Interest*, No. 41 (Fall 1995), p. 37, in Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 49

<sup>7</sup> Fred L. Borch, 'Comparing Pearl Harbor and "9/11": Intelligence Failure? American Unpreparedness? Military Responsibility?', *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 67 (2003), p. 846

Afghanistan in 1979 or the OPEC price increase in October 1973.<sup>8</sup> In an effort to analyze the quality of intelligence estimates preceding significant historical failures a group of experts was set up in 1983 concluding that the most common characteristic in the failed estimates

was that each involved *historical discontinuity* and, in the early stages, apparently unlikely outcomes. The basic problem in each was to recognize qualitative change and to deal with situations in which trend continuity and precedent were of marginal, if not counterproductive, value. Analysts of the period clearly lacked a doctrine or a model for coping with improbable outcomes [*emphasis added*].<sup>9</sup>

Analysts from the present continue to suffer from the same ‘lack-of-doctrine’ syndrome. In order to overcome this deficiency, Michel Foucault affirms ‘we must accept the introduction of chance as a category in the production of events’.<sup>10</sup> Foucault’s events, Lemert suggests, are ‘not the causal origin of the production of change, but the specific, discontinuous moment when a transformation is evident’.<sup>11</sup>

Simultaneously, Sherman Kent as well as Kuhns rightly point out that the constant in the failure of analysis was the inductive methodology used to forecast these types of events,<sup>12</sup> the unknowable *mysteries*, as Kent would call them. So what method should the intelligence community use to forecast *historical discontinuity* events reliably while guaranteeing certainty if induction is unable to do so?<sup>13</sup> The answer, as many experts would agree with Kuhns, ‘is that there is no obvious way in which predictions can be known in advance to be true or false, and therefore, there is no obvious way in which intelligence failures can be prevented. They are a function of the uncertain manner in which knowledge is gained’.<sup>14</sup> By default it follows then that whilst knowledge is gained in an uncertain manner this is possible. In order to accomplish this difficult task the application of theory is essential. The problem is, as the late Michael Handel would remind us, that ‘[i]ntelligence can’t live with theory and can’t live without it. This is the fundamental problem in using analysis to anticipate threats, prompt response by policymakers, and avoid surprise. Theories are necessary for judging the import of data, but they are also the source of mistaken judgment’.<sup>15</sup> In an effort to explain the differing frames of mind with which those who manage intelligence data approach theory, Handel pointed out that

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<sup>8</sup> Willis C. Armstrong, William Leonhart, et al., ‘The Hazards of Single-Outcome Forecasting’, in H. Bradford Westerfield, ed., ‘Inside CIA’s Private World’ (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 241

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language* (London: Tavistock, 1972), p. 231

<sup>11</sup> Charles C. Lemert & Garth Gillan, *Michel Foucault: Social Theory & Transgression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Woodrow J. Kuhns in Richard K. Betts & Thomas G. Mahnken (eds.), *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in honor of Michael I. Handel* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 90; Sherman Kent, ‘A Crucial Estimate Relived’, *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 35, No. 4, (1991), p. 65

<sup>13</sup> Woodrow J. Kuhns in Richard K. Betts & Thomas G. Mahnken (eds.) *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in honor of Michael I. Handel* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 90

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 93

<sup>15</sup> Michael I. Handel, ed., ‘Intelligence & Crisis Forecasting’, *Orbis*, No. 26, (1983), p. 828

[a]cademics are comfortable with theory and deal with it explicitly because they are not burdened with responsibility for particular outcomes and because they relish abstraction. Political decisionmakers [*sic*] and bureaucrats are uncomfortable with theory because they distrust abstraction and are responsible for concrete results. This does not mean they do not use theories but rather that they are more likely to do so implicitly than systematically. Much as they would like, officials cannot avoid generalizations (foreign policy is too complex and various policies have to be linked to some sorts of unifying themes), and generalizations are theoretical.<sup>16</sup>

Since bureaucrats and policymakers cannot escape theory and in the world of intelligence their main objective is to analyze and interpret the intelligence data available in order to make sound decisions, it follows that ‘interpretation cannot escape theory’.<sup>17</sup> Handel classified two types of theories; normal and exceptional. Normal theory—which he also called macro-theory—identifies longer-term intelligence forecasts [under which *historical discontinuity* failure may be cataloged] while exceptional theory—which he also called micro-theory—identifies short-term crisis predictions.<sup>18</sup> What Handel suggested was that analyses and interpretations of both theories required different professional qualities on behalf of both analysts and policymakers in order to reach a sound judgment. Unfortunately, Handel noted, ‘... it is usually the same individuals who have to deal with both types of problems’.<sup>19</sup> Hence, precisely for this reason specialized analysts and insightful policymakers are needed as this deficiency results in one probable cause for prediction failures. In this regard, Kent believed that when highly qualified policymakers’ and analysts’ forecasts are heeded, prediction becomes ‘a feasible task, provided that intelligence learns to use the methods being developed in the social sciences’.<sup>20</sup> Shulsky and Schmitt concur in that ‘this method is not only useful for statesmen, but [as] Kent implic[e]d, almost mandatory—anyone rejecting it can be accused of relying on a crystal ball or [...] intuition’.<sup>21</sup> Kent warned in this regard that

[w]hen the findings of the intelligence arm are regularly ignored by the consumer, and this is because of consumer intuition, [complacency, a self-interested agenda, or any other cognitive obstacle,] he should recognize that he is turning his back on the two instruments by which Western man has, since Aristotle, steadily enlarged his horizon of knowledge—the instruments of reason and scientific method.<sup>22</sup>

With this objective Kent proposed a dialogue between intelligence producers and consumers, understood in this context to bridge interpretation and theory in order to gain the potential to unearth the probability of certainty—combining policymakers’ knowledge of the broader world in with which they deal and that of the intelligence analysts in conveying

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 829

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> See, Abraham N. Shulsky & Gary J Schmitt., *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence* (Virginia: Potomac Books, 2002), p. 173 commenting on Kent and intelligence predictions.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American Foreign Policy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp. 206-207

critical *strategic intelligence*. Berkowitz and Goodman conclude that ‘strategic intelligence is designed to provide officials with the “big picture” and long range forecasts they need in order to plan for the future’.<sup>23</sup> But this is one fundamental problem because of the disinterested perception policymakers have about the uncertain nature of forecasting. In this regard Roger Hilsman pointedly remarked that

[m]ost popular writers on the subject of intelligence assume that the warning function is the basic role of intelligence [...] If one is talking about the kind of warning a secret agent would give, spying out some dramatic bit of information that has obvious and immediate significance, the operators [policymakers] would almost unanimously agree. But if one is talking about the kind of warning that comes from estimating trends, analyzing capabilities, and deducing intentions, their opinions would tend to vary.<sup>24</sup>

The view this study portrays is in line with Hilsman’s findings that policymakers are ‘opposed either entirely or in part to having intelligence analysts responsible for estimating and warning. Intelligence was [and still is] to provide the facts, and the policymakers were [then as they are now] to interpret them’.<sup>25</sup> It follows then that policymakers are singlehandedly responsible for long-term political intelligence forecasting failures. In other words, failures to follow and implement policy choices based on their failure to effectively interpret the main evolving or shifting trends in the larger picture puzzle. In this regard, Richard Betts argued, the primary problem in identifying and warning about ‘*major strategic surprises is not intelligence warning but political disbelief*’.<sup>26</sup> The reason policymakers and diplomats are primarily responsible is that they often have, or should have, an enhanced understanding of international political affairs due to their natural international connections and *liaisons* than do intelligence officers. In fact, some of the sharpest policymakers (Churchill, Truman, Kissinger, et al) tended to become their own intelligence officers.<sup>27</sup> One possible reason could be as James Bamford reported, and as President Clinton would often complain, ‘that most days the document [Presidential Daily Brief] contained much that he had already read [or learned about] elsewhere’.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Bruce D. Berkowitz & Allan E. Goodman, *Strategic Intelligence for American National Security* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 4

<sup>24</sup> Roger Hilsman, *Strategic Intelligence & National Decisions* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1956), p. 46

<sup>25</sup> Woodrow J. Kuhns in Richard K. Betts & Thomas G. Mahnken (eds.), *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in honor of Michael I. Handel*, (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 95; Roger Hilsman, *Strategic Intelligence & National Decisions* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1956), p. 49

<sup>26</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1982) in, Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 75

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Richard K. Betts & Thomas G. Mahnken (eds.), *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in honor of Michael I. Handel* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 29 on Churchill; p. 95 on Truman; and Herman, Michael (1996), *Intelligence Power in Peace & War* (London: RIIA), p. 142 on Kissinger.

<sup>28</sup> James Bamford, *A Pretext for War: 9/11, Iraq and the Abuse of America’s Intelligence Agencies* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 117 in Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 17



While intelligence failure experts and students agree that intelligence failures are by definition unavoidable, evidence suggests that the type of *historical discontinuity* or aclassical intelligence failure 9/11 represents, and those that occurred in its aftermath, could have been avoided had Western policymakers not failed to analyze and interpret properly the impact rampant *hypercapitalism* at the global level, which has created appallingly shocking socio-economic imbalances, would excise on both urban and rural societies, specifically those in the Muslim world. But, was this the case? What if policymakers had analyzed and—or interpreted the evolving terrorist threat trend, particularly the Islamist terrorist threat, properly, but chose to ignore it? We cannot know this with absolute certainty even when the benefit of hindsight begs for the answer. Section two will look at this question. What is certain, then, is that in order for intelligence analyses to be able to persuade effectively policymakers, both sophisticated estimating and a mechanism to unlock cognitive or self-interested friction is necessary to adopt effective countermeasures, which need not be necessarily strictly protective, but could be simply political or economic. In this regard Abbot Smith explained that

[s]ophisticated estimating indeed ought almost always to be something more than bald prediction. The course of events is seldom inevitable or foreordained, even though hindsight often makes it look that way. A good paper on a complicated subject should describe the trends and forces at work, identify the contingent factors or variables which might affect developments, and present a few alternative possibilities for the future, usually with some judgment as to the relative likelihood of one or another outcome.<sup>29</sup>

Decades after Abbot Smith issued this statement General Brent Scowcroft, National Security Advisor to several Presidents, agreed that intelligence estimates ought to remind the policymaker of ‘what forces are at work, what the trends are, and what are some possibilities he has to consider’.<sup>30</sup> Kuhns concluded that

estimates done in this fashion would be hard to characterize in the traditional terms of failure or success. A successful estimate would be one that had adequately and in a timely fashion prepared the policymaker to make an intelligent choice, even if that choice ultimately turned out to be incorrect. It would have considered all major trends and issues, and it would have delineated all major possible outcomes. A failed estimate would be just the opposite [... as well as one that ...] contained a single outcome forecast would be considered unsuccessful by these criteria.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Abbot Smith, ‘On the Accuracy of National Estimates’, [https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kentcsi/docs/v13i4a04p\\_0006.htm](https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kentcsi/docs/v13i4a04p_0006.htm) (Released 2 July, 1996), p. 29-30 (Accessed May 23, 2008)

<sup>30</sup> General Brent Scowcroft’s remarks given at the conference on ‘US Intelligence and the End of the Cold War’, Panel V, ‘The Use of Intelligence by Policymakers’ (Texas A&M University, 20 November, 1999) in ‘Intelligence & the Problem of Strategic Surprise’, in Richard K. Betts & T.G. Mahnken (eds.), *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 96

<sup>31</sup> Woodrow J. Kuhns in Richard K. Betts & Thomas G. Mahnken (eds.), *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in honor of Michael I. Handel* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 95

Ultimately the final decisions rest with policymakers and precisely because of this reason it sounds idiosyncratic that the 'high-level policy-maker' whose opinions count most 'will never get his evaluation of NIE's from an exhaustive study of them. He will have no more than a vague impression—an impression, however, which will suddenly and emphatically crystallize whenever an estimate crucial to his immediate concern proves wrong [or he decides to disregard it for unknown reasons]'.<sup>32</sup>

Intelligence services may be responsible for poor supply side intelligence, but not for poor demand side policy *requirements* regarding intelligence. In the run-up to 9/11 advanced '*strategic warning* [which] aims for analytic perception and effective communication to policy officials of important changes in the character or level of security threats that require re-evaluation of US [or other nation's] readiness to deter, avert, or limit damage—well in advance of incident-specific indicators',<sup>33</sup> was issued, yet this did not produce any practical results as far as effective countermeasures. It may be argued then that policymakers ignored for an extended period of time and for whatever reasons, *strategic intelligence* that pointed in fact, to 'the 'big picture' of the evolving threat. Therefore, in the final analysis, to the extent that intelligence analysts are to convey the facts, and policymakers are to interpret them it follows that intelligence analysts cannot be responsible for poor policy decisions resulting in *historical discontinuity* failures once adequate warning has been issued by an intelligence service and received by policymakers.

Now that an understanding of some of the basic theoretical tenets and practices surrounding *historical discontinuity* failures has been established, a contextualization and analysis of the main events and forces that contributed to the *historical discontinuity* failure that led to the 9/11 terrorist surprise attack will be discussed.

### ***The pre-9/11 world in context***

Numerous events in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly, shaped the nature of the evolving terrorist threat; most notably, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the advent of Globalization. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the international system experienced a fundamental change in its character. As Henry Kissinger noted,

[w]henver the entities constituting the international system [or its main entities] change their character, a period of turmoil inevitably follows... The collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakup of Yugoslavia have spawned another twenty nations, many of which have concentrated on reenacting centuries-old bloodlusts.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Abbot Smith, 'On the Accuracy of National Estimates', [https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kentcsi/docs/v13i4a04p\\_0006.htm](https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kentcsi/docs/v13i4a04p_0006.htm) (Released 2 July, 1996), p. 29-30 (Accessed May 23, 2008), p. 35

<sup>33</sup> Jack Davis, 'Strategic Warning: If Surprise is Inevitable, What Role for Analysis?', *The Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis*, Occasional Papers: Volume 2, Number 1, (January, 2003) <https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers/pdf/OPV2No1.pdf> (Accessed December 28, 2007), p. 3

<sup>34</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, (New York: Touchstone, 1995), p. 806

This fundamental shift in the character of the international system certainly 'posed a severe problem for policy makers and intelligence managers. Requirements [for intelligence] were uncertain or subject to rapid shifts ...<sup>35</sup> demanding superior diversity of expertise, talent, and political insight to manage these international developments. In the run-up to the 9/11 events and in the broader post-Cold War world era, threats to international peace and security became associated not only with ethnic violence, but also with a reinvigorated search to implement principles enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, reinforcing mainly the search for unfulfilled self-determinations during the integrationist period of the Cold War and Colonialism. State sponsorship of terrorism via failed and rogue states also continued to present an alternative threat, but was considered to be deterrable by bringing its sponsors into the new world order, either by sheer force or under international sanctions regimes. The most worrying threat however, became religious inspired terrorism, particularly militant Islamist terrorism. Simultaneously, the world had become *uni-polar*, a term coined by Joseph Nye, Jr. to identify the US as the sole superpower. Thus, the US put forward its goals for the development of a 'new world order', where the expansion of free institutions under the aegis of American democracy was the main objective. This claim was best expressed by President Clinton in 1993 in an address to the UN General Assembly when he stated that '[n]ow we seek to enlarge the circle of nations that live under those free institutions, for our dream is of a day when the opinions and energies of every person in the world will be given full expression in a world of thriving democracies that cooperate with each other and live in peace.'<sup>36</sup> Such was the hope mustered around this ideal in addition to the rise of a 'benevolent' China. However, the post-Cold War era gave rise to the fragmentation of societies across Eurasia and Indonesia reinforced by an ever-expansive *hyper-capitalism* and the publicity of the media under the umbrella of the spread of free-market economy and democratic values. Modernization became associated not just with Westernization, but more acutely with Americanization. The impact these rapidly and parallel developing processes inflicted upon national, but especially parochial cultures produced a shocking effect. This last argument was put forth with brilliance by Benjamin Barber, in *Jihad vs. McWorld*, where he metaphorically associated the forces of *Jihad* with provincialism, tribalism and parochialism, 'whether they call themselves Christian fundamentalists or Rwandan rebels or Islamic holy warriors [or even Japanese religious fanatics]<sup>37</sup> and the forces of *McWorld* with globalization. Barber argues the pejorative effects of globalization (e.g. *hyper-capitalism*, widening rich-poor divide, general loss of values, etc.) are a direct cause triggering an often violent response from groups or individuals seeking a return to pre-modern times or the maintenance of the societal *status quo*. The language they use in their response remains however, the language of nationalism, even when disguised under religious zealotry. In Barber's metaphor these parochial forces,

may appear to be directly adversarial to the forces of McWorld. Yet Jihad stands not so much in stark opposition as in subtle counterpoint to McWorld and is itself a dialectical response to modernity whose features both reflect and reinforce the

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<sup>35</sup> Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence: from Secrets to Policy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 2006), p. 235

<sup>36</sup> President Bill Clinton, 'Confronting the Challenges of a Broader World', address to the UN General Assembly, US Department of State Dispatch, Vol. 4, No. 39, (September 27, 1993), p. 650.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld* (London: Corgi Books, 1995), p. 165

modern world's virtues and vices—Jihad *via* McWorld rather than Jihad *versus* McWorld.<sup>38</sup>

The metaphor became a reality when a rebellion broke out in the Southern Mexican province of Chiapas on January 1994. The rebellion resulted as a response to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) system.<sup>39</sup> Reactionary anti-plural, anti-modern violent forces to globalization launched a wave of mass-casualty terrorist attacks throughout the 1990s, starting with the 1993 World Trade Centre (WTC) bombing and culminating in the 2004 Madrid and 2005 London bombings of the public transport system. The 1995 Sarin nerve gas attack by the Japanese cult *Aum Shinrikyo* on the Tokyo subway, the Oklahoma City bombing attributed to Christian extremists, and the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish radical, proves Islamist extremism is not alone in this violent reaction. However, nowhere was this reaction against modernity or rather Western or American version of modernity more vigorous and violent than in the Muslim world. Therefore, an explanation of the socio-political pulse which caused, triggered and shaped this violent reaction seems relevant. In this regard, El-Said and Harrigan explain that '[w]hile [the] globalization process, or *al-awlamah* as it is referred to in Arabic, has been much debated and analyzed, the analysis remains less global than it is thought to be and limited in focus to the wealthy sectors of the globe'.<sup>40</sup> This argument explains why the effects of globalization in the Muslim world went largely unnoticed for many in the West, including Western intelligence services and the Western intelligence community at large, throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Globalization studies emanating from and centering on the Arab world remain (even as of 2006) limited, carried out mostly by officials from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank,<sup>41</sup> or as Joseph Stiglitz acknowledged, by 'members of an elite—a minister of finance or the head of the central bank—with whom the Fund [World Bank or World Trade Organization] might have a meaningful dialogue'.<sup>42</sup> Ahmed and Donnan concur; '[t]he economic content of international contact has thus been emphasized at the expense of the *cultural* flows which were obviously taking place alongside the material changes; indeed, the place of 'culture' in [intelligence] analyses of global interconnections such as world systems theory is a matter of some disagreement, with some alleging [as this study does] that it has been left out ...'.<sup>43</sup> Though both Ahmed and Donnan demonstrate that, at a general level, cultural flows are currently considered by the current form or phase of globalization resulting in the notion of a homogenizing global culture, when related to the realm of Islam the picture appears different. The disconnect between Islam, its cultural flows and economic and political realities of globalization conveys an inherent bias towards overstating the benefits and understating the costs of globalization in the Muslim world, particularly the political costs globalization would inflict on these societies. The ignorance by Western policymakers and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 157

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., Paul Rogers, *Losing Control: Global Security in the Twenty-first Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p. 78; Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld* (London: Corgi Books, 1995), pp. 88-100

<sup>40</sup> Hamed El-Said & Jane Harrigan, 'Globalization, International Finance, and Political Islam in the Arab World', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer, 2006), p. 444

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 445

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization & its Discontents* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 41

<sup>43</sup> Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 3

Western intelligence services of the socio-political dynamics that globalization would unravel in Muslim societies, as a result of either not carrying out appropriate political analysis [and political intelligence analysis] or as a result of plain disregard on behalf of Western policymakers for its consequences by virtue of self-interested economic agendas, were defined by Cook and Minogue in 1990 as the 'politics-blindness'.<sup>44</sup> There was no such naïveté. The reality was that 'pan-Western corporate solidarity was seen as the bedrock of world politics, with international relations viewed as virtually a branch of international business',<sup>45</sup> and intelligence services simply followed on policymakers' new intelligence requirements, which directed them to focus on economic intelligence.<sup>46</sup> As a result, significant human and material resources that could have focused on political analyses and political intelligence efforts to measure appropriately the evolving Islamist terrorist threat were spent.

But globalization has a positive side as well, not alien to the Muslim world. In this regard, Samuel Huntington argued that 'modernization does not equal Westernization—*farnaja*, in Arabic. Japan, Singapore and Saudi Arabia are modern, prosperous societies but they are clearly non-Western'.<sup>47</sup> However, '[t]he presumption of Westerners that other peoples who modernize must become "like us" is a bit of Western arrogance that in itself illustrates [*not*] the clash of civilizations'<sup>48</sup> as Huntington argued, but a lack of understanding with regard to the impact and consequences of the shifting dynamics imposed by the pace of modernity on local, regional and international Muslim society. The problematic arises 'when globalization is implemented prematurely, as has been the case under the auspices of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO [or what may also be called the Washington Consensus group], that it has been associated with negative social and economic consequences'.<sup>49</sup> Certainly Muslim political elites have been responsible for part of this negative relationship and association which resulted in disappointing economic performances throughout the pre-9/11 world and broader post-Cold War era even as new regimes emerged. In fact, 'Poor economic management, corruption, and high and prolonged periods of heavy protection ... led to large waste and inefficiencies since the early 1980s [and even 1990s].'<sup>50</sup> As a result, almost all Arab states, one after the next, though some to different degrees, turned to the

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Cook & Martin Minogue, 'Waiting for Privatization in Developing Countries: Toward the Integration of Economic and non-Economic Explanations', *Public Administration & Development*, Vol. 10 (1990), p. 400

<sup>45</sup> Paul Todd & Jonathan Bloch, *Global Intelligence: the World's Secret Services Today* (London: Zed Books, 2003), p. 76

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., Stansfield Turner 'Intelligence for a New World Order', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 4, (fall, 1991), pp. 151-153; Paul Todd & Jonathan Bloch, *Global Intelligence: the World's Secret Services Today* (London: Zed Books, 2003), pp. 75-77; Stephen Dorril, *The Silent Conspiracy: Inside the Intelligence Services in the 1990s* (London: Mandarin, 1994), pp. 323-325

<sup>47</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'If Not Civilizations, What?', *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1993), p. 192

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Hamed El-Said & Jane Harrigan, 'Globalization, International Finance, and Political Islam in the Arab World', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer, 2006), p. 446; See, e.g., John Toye, *Dilemmas of Development* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); see, e.g., M. Florio, 'Economists, Privatisation in Russia and the Waning of the Washington Consensus', *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 2002), pp. 374-415, Wayne Ellwood, *No Non-Sense Guide to Globalisation* (London: Verso, 2004).

<sup>50</sup> Hamed El-Said & Jane Harrigan, 'Globalization, International Finance, and Political Islam in the Arab World', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer, 2006), p. 448

Washington Consensus institutions for support. Gaining support implied applying severe Structural Adjustment Plans (SAP) and other financial and fiscal measures whose efficacy in ‘supporting’ developing countries had been questioned.<sup>51</sup> The result, as El-Ghorneini’s analysis concluded was that in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Sudan, Turkey, Algeria, and Mauritania,

despite improvement in macroeconomic indicators, the social situation in each reforming country got ‘worse than before reform’. Not only did unemployment and poverty increase, inequality of income also worsened in all of them, except in Tunisia, which managed to reduce poverty and inequality in the mid-1990s by violating IMF conditionality and refusing to compromise on social welfare and protection of the poor.<sup>52</sup>

These evolving political and economic processes pitted Muslim moderate and conservative socio-political elites against each other to varying degrees in each country. The seed for violent reaction against what has been qualified before as modernization, Westernization, or an Americanized version of modernity had been laid down throughout the Muslim world.

In acknowledging the importance of the study of Islamic studies in relation to, and as a way of illustrating as well, the impact of modernity and globalization, Ahmed and Donnan pointed out that

[o]ne consequence of the globalization process is the necessity to look at Islamic studies not as an esoteric or marginal exercise, but as something that concerns the global community. We are thus forced to look at Muslims in different parts of the world not as a preserve of specialist scholars but as an ever-present ubiquitous reality that relates to non-Muslims in the street.<sup>53</sup>

As such, this developing reality should have formed part of policymakers’ foreign policy analyses and agendas as well as that of Western intelligence experts, considering Muslim society accounts for some one billion people living in over fifty countries, including in Western countries.<sup>54</sup> The evolution of the likely consequences this reality would have should have been more carefully reflected on realizing their inevitable, but gradual, spread into the international level, even when revealing themselves first locally and regionally. Obliviousness to these dynamics may be attributed to the emphasis Western policymakers’ intelligence requirements placed on economic intelligence, even while acknowledging the evolution of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 456; SAPs: relate to conditions for getting new loans from the IMF or World Bank, or for obtaining lower interest rates on existing loans. Conditionalities are implemented to ensure that monies lent will be spent in accordance with the overall goals of the loan. SAPs are created with the goal of reducing the borrowing country's fiscal imbalances.

<sup>52</sup> Riad El-Ghorney, *Affluence and Poverty in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 1998), in Hamed El-Said & Jane Harrigan, ‘Globalization, International Finance, and Political Islam in the Arab World’, *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer, 2006), p. 178-180

<sup>53</sup> Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 2

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

the Islamist terrorist threat. The CIA, for example, was ordered by National Security Directive (NSD) 67, in 1992, to commit to economic intelligence.<sup>55</sup>

Globalization clearly opened an intellectual debate with regard to the proper role of Islam in relation to the changes brought forth by modernity and postmodernity, and has been since then, gaining exponential intensity since the 1980s within the Muslim world. I will not provide a definition of modernity or postmodernity because I regard them as Ernest Gellner insightfully described them; this is, as merely code terms that 'are not intended to decide any issues',<sup>56</sup> They are code terms that describe shifting trends in society as a result of the evolving interactions inherent in the character of the globalization of the latter part of the XX century. Just to what extent the relationship between modernity and postmodernity is in opposition is not clear, but what is clear is that postmodernity '... emphasizes noise, movement and speed. Traditional religions [such as Islam] emphasize quiet, balance and discourage change. There are thus, intrinsic points of conflict'.<sup>57</sup>

### ***The nature of the terrorist threat before 9/11***

The intellectual debate within the Muslim world alluded to previously divided those who rejected Westernization, modernity or postmodernity altogether and those who believed, like Sheikhs Muhammad al-Ghazali and Yusef al-Qardawi, that Western achievements could be accommodated within Islam.<sup>58</sup> The assimilation of global trends created societal anxieties, particularly in the Muslim world where '... one aspect of this [reaction was defined as] ... the so called Islamic fundamentalist response: people concerned about the pace of change and what this will do to the next generation ...',<sup>59</sup> and whether these trends can define the end of their culture and traditions as well. As a result, 'Islamic fundamentalism and Islamism, has been a significant factor in the politics of predominantly Muslim countries as well as the primary language of political discourse and mobilization from North Africa to Southeast Asia'.<sup>60</sup> However, Islamist fundamentalism, Gellner argued, 'repudiates the tolerant modernist claim that the faith in question means something much milder, far less exclusive, altogether less demanding and much more accommodating; above all something quite compatible with all other faiths, even, or especially, with the lack of faith'.<sup>61</sup> Islam, like other religions, can be thought of as an overlapping and linked set of beliefs (faith) and practices, as well as a provider of a particular identity.<sup>62</sup> In complete

<sup>55</sup> Paul Todd & Jonathan Bloch, *Global Intelligence: the World's Secret Services Today* (London: Zed Books), p. 76

<sup>56</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and religion* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 2

<sup>57</sup> Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 13

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Rachid al-Ghannouchi, 'EnNahda (the Renaissance Party): Profile & interview' in Davis M., Joyce (1999), *Between Jihad & Salaam. Profiles in Islam*, (New York: St. Martin Griffin), pp. 81-105

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> John L. Esposito, 'Terrorism & the Rise of Political Islam', in Louise Richardson (Ed), *Democracy and Terrorism: The Roots of Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2006), Vol. 1, p. 145

<sup>61</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and religion* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 3

<sup>62</sup> Abdulkarim Soroush 'From Islam as an Identity to Secular Politics', drawing a distinction between Islam as identity and Islam that teaches truths in Michael Freeman, 'Democracy, al-Qaeda, and the Causes of Terrorism: a Strategic Analysis of US Policy', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 31, (2008), pp. 40-59; See also Anna

juxtaposition to the secularization experiences of other industrial and industrializing societies where the influence of religion diminished, Gellner appreciated that ‘the hold of Islam over the minds and hearts of believers has not diminished and, by some criteria, has probably increased’.<sup>63</sup> But this was not simply a recent development. Since the XII century, before the fall of the Caliphate, ‘the attempt by philosophically oriented scholars [such as Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun and in the XIX century al-Tahtawi] to inject a strong dose of pre-Islamic, Greek philosophy failed: it was the anti-philosophical theologians who prevailed’.<sup>64</sup> George Joffé also agreed with Gellner in that ‘[t]he Islamic world seems to lack the ability to confront the challenge of modernism and has chosen instead to turn inwards towards Islam as a political paradigm. As a result, there appears to be a reluctance to adopt democratic principles of government’.<sup>65</sup> Both Gellner’s appreciations about the socio-political and religious discourse within the realm of Islam, as well as Joffé’s years later, needs to be placed in perspective as their analyses within the changing dynamics of Muslim societies was to become of tantamount importance to the world of intelligence throughout the 1980s, 1990s and beyond.

The Islamic revival that began in the mid 1980s introducing the innovative theory of the Islamic state, with *Tabwid* as its ideological doctrine, developed as a result of disenchantment mainly with Arab nationalism and projected itself throughout the 1990s.<sup>66</sup> Nazih Ayubi explained that ‘[t]he original concept of *Tabwid* (one-ness, unification, monotheism) was gradually transformed into a concept of unique, supreme, absolute power for the ruler’.<sup>67</sup> The main question, Fred Halliday would present was whether, and if, ‘in any of its variants, it could provide a solution to the problems which Muslims face today’.<sup>68</sup> The development of the Islamic revival coincided also with, and or, may have also been attributed to, the merger between the High Islam of the Scholars and the Low Islam of the people. In this regard, Gellner warned that

[t]he danger for the Muslim ruler was [precisely] the fusion of these two forces: a revivalist movement insisting on the maintenance or restoration of an

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Simons, ‘Making Enemies: An Anthropology of Islamist Terror, Part I’, *The American Interest* (Summer 2006), p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Ernest Gellner, ‘foreword’ in Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994)

<sup>64</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and religion* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 9; for Ibn Rushd, cf: Oliver Leaman, *Averroes & his Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 178; for Ibn Khaldun, cf: Al-Tahtawi, Rifa’a Rifa, ‘Civil Rights’, in *Modernist & Fundamentalist Debates in Islam: A Reader*, Moaddel, Mansoor & Talatoff, Kamran, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 189-196

<sup>65</sup> George Joffé, ‘Democracy, Islam & the culture of Modernism’, *Democratization*, Vol.4, No.3, (Autumn, 1997), pp. 133

<sup>66</sup> See, e.g., Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion & Politics in the Arab World*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 1-34

<sup>67</sup> Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion & Politics in the Arab World*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 15

<sup>68</sup> Fred Halliday quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 93



uncompromising religious truth, and sustained by the support of cohesive, armed and militarily experienced rural self-governing communities.<sup>69</sup>

Irrespective of the objectives sought by each of the different forces in their unifying mutation, what was relevant for Western policymaking and intelligence was that their merger inevitably spelled a security threat to Muslim states thereby creating regional, and potentially, international instability. In fact, revolts against modernizing, and centralizing states ensued throughout the Muslim world. ‘This was classically the case in Iran in 1978-79, and it also applies in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey and, in very different circumstances, Afghanistan’.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, identification with the merger between these two forces had a unifying effect for Muslims considering ‘Islam provides a national identity, notably in the context of the struggle of colonialism [and Western influences]’.<sup>71</sup> But, as Nikki Keddie argued,

Islamism is not strong in states which are *really* largely traditional and have not experienced a major Western cultural impact, though such states are increasingly rare as Westernization impinges almost anywhere. The people in such states may still follow a number of Islamic laws, but militant mass movements calling for an Islamic state and an end to Western influence are relatively small.<sup>72</sup>

Political Islam’s initial success in many Muslim states came as a result of the identification, appropriation and promotion of a social welfare slogan intended to end with the corruption of authoritarian rulers. This basis enabled these movements to gain strong legitimacy. In this respect, Rachid al-Ghannouchi, leader of the Party of Renaissance, *Hiżb al-Nahda*, in Tunisia would proclaim in 1989 that ‘[t]he time has come to raise the slogan of the prestige of society, of the citizen, and of the power which serves both’.<sup>73</sup> As a result of the increasingly growing appeal of political Islam, Huntington noted that, ‘[i]n 1995 every country with a predominantly Muslim population, except Iran, was more Islamic and Islamist culturally, socially, and politically than it was fifteen years earlier’.<sup>74</sup> The explanation Huntington provided was that the Islamic revival proved “Islam was the solution” to the problems of morality, identity, meaning, and faith, but not to the problems of social justice, political repression, economic backwardness, and military weakness [widespread in the Muslim world].<sup>75</sup> Notwithstanding the experience of the Iranian revolution, with its inherent Shi’a character, the Sudanese experience attempting to establish an Islamic state under Hassan al-

<sup>69</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and religion* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 9-10

<sup>70</sup> Fred Halliday quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 94

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15

<sup>72</sup> Nikki Keddie, ‘Ideology, Society and the State in Post-Colonial Muslim Societies’, in Fred Halliday & Hamza Alavi (eds.), *State & Ideology in the Middle East & Pakistan* (London: Macmillan Education, 1988), p. 16; cf: Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion & Politics in the Arab World*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 70

<sup>73</sup> Rachid al-Ghannouchi ‘Interview with Ghannouchi’, *Realities* (April, 1989), p. 192

<sup>74</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 111

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121

Turabi proved Huntington right.<sup>76</sup> Preventing the legalization of *Hizb al-Nahda* radicalized the Islamists in Tunisia in 1989 and the inability to ascertain a different outcome in Algeria, after Islamists of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) came to power by the ballot in 1991 and their electoral victory was annulled in 1992, leaves little room for other responses. Under the tutelage of the army, the secular party of national liberation was restored to power, which triggered a civil war.<sup>77</sup> Mahfoud Nahnah, leader of the moderate HAMAS movement in Algeria argued that the FIS would have not upheld democratic values.<sup>78</sup> In this respect, Echevarria suggests that '[t]o Tunis, Algeria's problems only showed the folly of allowing elections that include Islamists. Many Tunisians are reluctant to support a cause that seems to threaten economic growth'.<sup>79</sup> In assessing these views, 'a recent survey in Jordan suggests that the Islamic movement there has lost 25 percent of the support it enjoyed in 1989 because voters have now had an opportunity to see what Islamists could do in power, and the 1993 elections confirm this trend'.<sup>80</sup> It can be said then that '[d]emocracy is promoted, but not if it brings Islamic fundamentalists to power'.<sup>81</sup> Huntington suggested that the failure of political Islam could conceivably generate a more intensely anti-Western nationalism 'blaming the West for the failures of Islam'.<sup>82</sup> Even while perceptions may go quite far in determining reality, Halliday would, nonetheless, refute Huntington, categorically stating that

[t]he argument, whether made by Islamists or their enemies, that 'Islam' constitutes a strategic threat to the West is nonsense—not least because of the weak economic condition of the supposedly menacing countries. The theory of the clash of civilizations operates with a deterministic concept of 'civilization', and understates the degree to which conflict is between peoples of similar orientation.<sup>83</sup>

Ahmed and Donnan reflected on what the Western media's message projected throughout the 1980s and 1990s arguing that while some evidence of diversity in broadcasting on issues that concerned Muslims existed, there was a tendency toward ambivalence as some

[p]opular surveys in the West indicate[d] that the majority of people feel that Islam will be the main villain in the coming time. In turn, Muslims feel that the suffering of their community—in Bosnia, in Palestine, in Kashmir—is ignored by the world,

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion & Politics in the Arab World*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 104-113

<sup>77</sup> See, e.g., Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld*, op. cit., p. 208; and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, (New York: Touchstone), p. 198

<sup>78</sup> See, e.g., Mahfoud Nahnah, 'The Islamic Society Movement (HAMAS): Profile & interview' in Davis M. Joyce, *Between Jihad & Salaam. Profiles in Islam*, (New York: Griffin, 1999), pp 67-79

<sup>79</sup> Carlos Echevarria J., 'Radical Islam in the Maghreb', *Orbis*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 2004), p. 361

<sup>80</sup> Dale Eickelman, 'Trans-state Islam & Security', in Rudolph, H., Susanne & Piscatori, James, (eds.), *Transnational Religion & Fading States* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 40

<sup>81</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, (New York: Touchstone), p. 184

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121

<sup>83</sup> Fred Halliday quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 91; the term *jihad* refers in this quote to military struggle as opposed to an individual's internal struggle.

although it has the law and UN resolutions on its side, simple because of hostility to Islam. Many Muslims talk of a new crusade against them; of the need for *jihad*.<sup>84</sup>

Despite these perceptions, Graham Fuller concurred with Halliday in that the problem for the West was not Islam. ‘The problem is hardship and frustrations born of rapid socioeconomic development in a variety of Muslim countries—mirroring problems found in the non-Muslim Third World as well—and a resentment of foreign cultural influence that threatens to engulf their own’.<sup>85</sup> Esposito agrees with Fuller, but suggests a solution to these problems that lead to resentment and asserts that

Terrorists must be marginalized and delegitimated. Attempts to win the hearts and minds and to wage an ideological counteroffensive in this war of ideas require substantive foreign policy reforms. The primary causes or motivations of terrorism—the political and economic conditions and grievances that feed anger, alienation, and rage—must be addressed and ameliorated.<sup>86</sup>

All these arguments make valuable contributions in understanding the nature of the terrorist threat and how to counter it. Nonetheless, and as far as intelligence is concerned, and particularly US intelligence, a CIA report predicted as early as 1947, that ‘a rise in religious-based anger among the Middle East’s Muslims ... could lead to terrorism born of zealotry, which it said could become a long-term problem for the Christian West’.<sup>87</sup>

Some anthropologists and sociologists argue that ‘[t]here is a tendency for the major intellectual conflicts in human history to be binary’:<sup>88</sup> good versus evil, faith versus reason or liberalism versus socialism. Islamist fundamentalism, despite its sea of variants in form, content and location, was monolithically and flawdly analyzed in the West, just as communism had been in the past. It was seen as in direct opposition to modernity and

<sup>84</sup> Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 9

<sup>85</sup> Graham Fuller, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the Northern Tier Countries: An Integrative View* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1991), p. 31 in Dale Eickelman, ‘Trans-state Islam & Security’, in Susanne Hoebber Rudolph & James Piscatori (eds.), *Transnational Religion & Fading States* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 40

<sup>86</sup> John L. Esposito, ‘Terrorism & the Rise of Political Islam’, in Louise Richardson (Ed), *Democracy and Terrorism: The Roots of Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2006), Vol. 1, p. 156

<sup>87</sup> Thomas W. Lippman, ‘The View from 1947: The CIA & the Partition of Palestine’, *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Winter 2007), p. 17-18; cf: Central Intelligence Agency, ‘The Consequences of the Partition of Palestine,’ ORE 55, November 28, 1947. Text Central Intelligence Agency (November 28, 1947), ‘The Consequences of the Partition of Palestine’, ORE 55, fin in <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp?pageNumber=2&freqReqRecord=undefined&refinedText=undefined&freqSearchText=undefined&txtSearch=ORE+55&exactPhrase=undefined&allWords=undefined&anyWords=undefined&withoutWords=undefined&documentNumber=undefined&startCreatedMonth=&startCreatedDay=&startCreatedYear=&endCreatedMonth=&endCreatedDay=&endCreatedYear=0&startReleasedMonth=&startReleasedDay=&startReleasedYear=&endReleasedMonth=&endReleasedDay=&endReleasedYear=0&sortOrder=ASC> (Accessed June 19, 2008)

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 1; and Michael Foucault, ‘Lectures at the Collège de France’, in Mauro Bertani & Alessandro Fontana, et al, Eds. (2004), trans. David Macey, *Society must be defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76* (London: Penguin), p. 51-62

therefore Western values associated with it. Countering this view, Olivier Roy concluded that those Islamist movements based on the fundamentalist prognosis

are products of the modern world. The militants are not mullahs; they are young products of the modern education systems, and those who are university educated graduates tend to be more scientific than literary .... They do not advocate a return to what existed before, as do fundamentalists in the strict sense of the word, but a reappropriation of society and modern technology based on politics.<sup>89</sup>

For Roy the Islamist milieu dilemma 'is not one of being either moderate or radical. Mainstream fundamentalists oppose radical and moderate Islamists (including supranational jihadists as well as those who support a shift to democracy and multipartism)'.<sup>90</sup> Gerges, on the other hand, defines those Islamist extremists that advocate the use of violence using the term 'doctrinaire *jihadis*'.<sup>91</sup> Whatever semantics defining these Islamist violent outcast groups, clearly, the main inflexion point which drew a wedge between Muslim moderates, Muslim conservatives or fundamentalists, and supranational or 'doctrinaire *jihadis*', as well as between them and Western society was over the role of modernity, its pace, and its impact within the realm of Islam. The inability to internalize successfully this debate on behalf of the Islamist extremists, turned some of them into militant Islamists ready to pursue extreme forms of violence to achieve their political goals. Thus, governments throughout the Middle East clamped down on their bases or leaders forcing them to migrate.<sup>92</sup> The problem that arose was that in such criminalizing process many moderate Islamists were also prosecuted, tortured or jailed, inevitably antagonizing some of them. From a realist perspective it is assumed that 'laws, simply stated, precede and define criminality',<sup>93</sup> but the reality is that it is the material conditions of life that do, for '... legal relations as well as forms of state could not be understood by themselves, nor explained by the so called general progress of the human mind ...'.<sup>94</sup> Thenceforth, Muslim extremists sought refuge mainly in the periphery of the Muslim world and within Western countries where they organized to plan a new strategy of opposition.<sup>95</sup> Western policymakers and Western intelligence should have accepted that it is only when the different Islamist movements articulate their discourses through the

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<sup>89</sup> Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 3

<sup>90</sup> Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: the Search for the New Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 247

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, pp. 75-88; Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global?* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 1

<sup>92</sup> See, e.g., Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global?* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 117-118; Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 125

<sup>93</sup> Peter Andreas & Ethan, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization & Crime Control in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 11

<sup>94</sup> Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to a Critique on Political Economy', N.I. Stone, trans. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1904), p. 11

<sup>95</sup> See, e.g., Robin Niblett, 'Islamic Extremism in Europe', Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on European Affairs, *Center for Strategic & International Studies* (April 5, 2006) <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2006/NiblettTestimony060405.pdf> (Accessed June 17, 2008)

language of nationalism and 'proclaim their adherence to Islam can [they] be seen in their own specific contexts and as part of a loose, variegated, and uncoordinated international system'.<sup>96</sup> This 'system' would evolve fragmented into those Muslims who migrated to Western countries as a result of socio-economic reasons and those Muslims, as well as Islamist extremists, who migrated or felt resentment towards both their host countries as well as Western countries, as a result of the stagnant political process in their own Muslim homeland. These dynamics raise the following questions for Western intelligence: If, in fact, socio-political and anthropological expertise unveiled the surface of the nature of the evolving terrorist menace, and intelligence experts had also identified it, what does this instance say about policymakers' failure to not only heed this expert advice, but also to bring forth one of their own?

### ***Islamist terrorist groups go West***

Despite the forced diaspora that fell upon Islamist extremists, not all radical Islamist groups decided to target Western countries upon their arrival. While some groups certainly resorted to violence though directed this at what they considered illegitimate authoritarian rule, other mainstream Islamist groups were labeled extremist simply because they opposed rulers in the Middle East. Thus, 'drawing a sharp distinction between mainstream and extremist movements remains critical as far as Western countries' homeland security is concerned. Whereas terrorists require a security policy with zero tolerance, mainstream Islamists, especially political parties, require engagement by their governments and Western governments'.<sup>97</sup> This engagement certainly failed to come to pass as '[t]he 1990s witnessed not only the continuing decline in the prospects of many Muslim immigrants in Europe, but also, outside Europe, the rise of a new Islamic resistance ...'.<sup>98</sup> These dynamics led Robin Niblett to argue, in retrospect, that

Europe has become part of the battleground of a growing Islamic civil war between different schools of Islam and, in particular, between governmentally-controlled schools and those groups which currently seek to promote a more global approach, from the conservative and sometimes extreme Muslim Brotherhood to the violent Al Qaeda.<sup>99</sup>

The schism in the local versus global approach (i.e., between local and global militant Islamists or doctrinaire *jihadis*) with which Islamist extremists sought the overthrow of apostate leaders, and its implications, is a key factor that should have not gone unnoticed or have been ignored by Western policymakers' and intelligence experts' analyses. Indeed, it was not the end of history as Francis Fukuyama advocated, but a clear acknowledgement of

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<sup>96</sup> Fred Halliday quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 96

<sup>97</sup> John L. Esposito, 'Terrorism & the Rise of Political Islam', in Louise Richardson (Ed), *Democracy and Terrorism: The Roots of Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2006), Vol. 1, p. 157

<sup>98</sup> Robin Niblett, 'Islamic Extremism in Europe', Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on European Affairs, *Center for Strategic & International Studies* (April 5, 2006) <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2006/NiblettTestimony060405.pdf> (Accessed June 17, 2008), p. 5

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 4

the 'fact that standard-issue western modernization theory has been wrong [in its analyses] about other Islamic societies ...'<sup>100</sup> and their evolution pre-9/11. *Historical discontinuity* had just escaped Western policymakers' and intelligence experts' frame of analysis.

An in depth examination of Islamist extremist groups which projected themselves into the West, their organizations and their characteristics will not be dealt with here, though some facts from the two most notorious terrorist groups in the pre-9/11 world, which operated trans-nationally, including in Western countries, are noteworthy as they cast a shadow over intelligence performance and hence, to the extent of intelligence failure in identifying the nature of the terrorist threat before 9/11, the subject of this study's analysis. Two terrorist networks would lead the opposition strategy within a loose and uncoordinated system of violent reaction from a global dimension and would begin violent operations in Western countries: (1) the al-Qaeda network, and (2) the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA). In the pre-9/11 world al-Qaeda was classified as a utopian group, while the GIA came under this category only after 1995, when it murdered a fellow Islamist. Once both groups initiated their campaign of indiscriminate, though targeted, terrorist attacks, they fell under the apocalyptic category. Terrorist groups under this category 'firmly believe that they have been divinely ordained to commit violent acts and are most likely to engage in mass-casualty, catastrophic terrorism'.<sup>101</sup> It would be Walter Laqueur who identified in 1996 how this threat was mutating at the operational level: 'In the future, terrorists will be individuals or like-minded people working in very small groups on the pattern of the technology hating Unabomber ...'.<sup>102</sup> To which degree Western intelligence perceived the threat from both the GIA and al-Qaeda pre-9/11 cannot be confirmed, though the benefit of hindsight, at least, points its clear identification.<sup>103</sup>

Although al-Qaeda was originally conceived by Abdullah Azzam in 1987 as an Islamic army ready to do battle on behalf of the *ummah* (greater Islamic community), but without the targeting of Western homelands,<sup>104</sup> its founder's murder signaled a departure from al-Qaeda's original ideal into that of a global terrorist network, conceptualized by Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of the expatriate Egyptian Islamic Jihad and a responsible party for the murder of Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat in 1981. Usama bin Laden, a wealthy and experienced *mujabedeem* from the Afghan-Soviet war, on the other hand, 'was already telling fellow *jihadis* in the mid-1980s that America was the enemy of Islam ...'.<sup>105</sup> Notwithstanding, al-Qaeda, as a formal organization was not activated until after 1996, officially establishing itself under the umbrella of the World Islamic Front in 1998.<sup>106</sup> The Sunni Islamist groups, particularly Palestinian, had adopted the Shi'a Hizbullah's

<sup>100</sup> David Martin Jones & M.L.R. Smith, 'Greetings from the Cybercaliphate', *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5, (2005), p. 932

<sup>101</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 93

<sup>102</sup> Walter Laqueur, 'Postmodern Terrorism: New Rules for an Old Game', *Foreign affairs*, No. 75 (September/October 1996), p. 6

<sup>103</sup> See, e.g., Maria Do Ceu Pinto, 'Some US Concerns Regarding Islamist & Middle Easter Terrorism', *Terrorism & Political Violence*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (September, 1999), p. 77

<sup>104</sup> Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global?* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 136

<sup>105</sup> Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of al-Qaeda* (London: Abacus, 2007), p. 155

<sup>106</sup> Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global?* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 55

suicide mission *modus operandi* and tactics as a result of Hizbullah's successful campaign against French and American forces in Beirut in 1983, which caused them to withdraw from Lebanon. Hizbullah's tactics did not go unnoticed for the new al-Qaeda leadership, who was inspired by Imad Mugniyeh (Hizbullah's director of operations), to develop coordinated, simultaneous attacks. Bin Laden expected to inflict upon Western, and particularly American forces, heavy blows in the expectation their resolve would be as weak as it proved in Lebanon. In this fashion, bin Laden calculated his objectives could be met. Certainly martyr—*shahid*—suicide missions drew both support and critique from Muslim spiritual and legal experts, though this is not relevant to this discussion. What is relevant is that a tactical alliance that focused on the training of al-Qaeda operatives, indeed, existed between Hizbullah and al-Qaeda and was acknowledged by the US intelligence community in February 2000, according to Rohan Gunaratna.<sup>107</sup> This evidence pointed to a potential escalation of violence directed at Western interests.

The major departure in the original *modus* and *locus operandi* of these groups occurred in the early 1990s as they began operating in the fragmented regions of North and East Africa, Chechnya, Kashmir and Indonesia; and in Europe, in the former Yugoslavia, France and the UK. While the GIA radicalized after the FIS electoral fallout when ousted by the Algerian army, al-Qaeda's new shock force innately could not avoid but to be disconnected from the genuine Muslim world they claimed to represent.<sup>108</sup> As Roy suggested previously, these new Islamist extremists were not mullahs, but rather products of the Western education systems, and particularly, Western educated Muslim youths. Therefore, the question may not have been to what extent Islamist groups went West as it was to what extent the West went into them?

The GIA, formed in 1992-1993, waged a brutal campaign of violence in Algeria, but also throughout neighboring countries in Northern Africa, eventually taking the fight to the heart of France.<sup>109</sup> One of its members, affiliated with al-Qaeda, Kharmareddine Kherhane, would bring the GIA into al-Qaeda's global approach, effectively infiltrating the Algerian group. When al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremist groups denounced the GIA's violence upon Muslims, Hassan Hattab, head of the GIA network in Europe, was encouraged to break away from the GIA leadership and join the newly formed splinter group, *Groupe Salfiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC), whose penetration had been completed by al-Qaeda between 1998-2000.<sup>110</sup> Consolidation of the radical Islamist global network was therefore, gradually taking shape as the intensity of its violent attacks against Western targets increased and new members were recruited in the Western world.<sup>111</sup> Islamist extremists with a global approach towards violence in Western countries added a new layer of threat to Western

<sup>107</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qa'eda*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 147-148

<sup>108</sup> Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: the Search for the New Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 51

<sup>109</sup> See, e.g., Carlos Echevarria J., 'Radical Islam in the Maghreb', *Orbis*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 352-357

<sup>110</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qa'eda*, op. cit., pp. 137-139; cf: Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of al-Qaeda* (London: Abacus, 2007), p. 233

<sup>111</sup> See, e.g., Olivier Roy, 'EuroIslam: the Jihad Within', *The National Interest*, No. 71 (Spring, 2003), pp. 63-73, for the evolution of other radical Islamist movements in Europe such as the *Hizb ut-Tabrir*—Party of Liberation, which declares itself officially non-violent.

intelligence and security services' efforts. Indeed, as Marc Sageman has argued 'the process of joining the jihad [whether local or global] ... is more of a bottom-up [rather] than a top-bottom activity'.<sup>112</sup> The role of local 'radical mosques' and '*jihadism* online' has aided in this process. This stance gains much credence considering the recruitment experiences of the likes of the London School of Economics (LSE) student Omar Sheikh and would be suicide bomber Richard Reid. Therefore, the nature of radical Islamist recruitment methodology also presented new obstacles for Western security services in terms of intelligence gathering. These obstacles were augmented by a 'quasi-official doctrine of multiculturalism [which] masked the [UK] government's incoherent shift between prosecution and celebration'.<sup>113</sup> This 'doctrine', unlike that in France and Spain, also had its equivalent in the US, until the 1993 WTC bombings, which subsequently led to the imprisonment of the blind Sheikh, Omar Abdul Rahmman, eventually considered the spiritual leader of the al-Qaeda global network. French and Spanish authorities, as well as intelligence services certainly enforced a zero tolerance policy towards those extremists, Islamist or otherwise, that issued public advocacy and apology for terrorism. But it would be the French intelligence and security authorities, with a greater degree of experience in dealing with Islamist terrorism, who would be at the forefront facing the Islamist extremist challenge. French contemporary experience with Islamist terrorism was connected to their Algerian colonial innuendo's in 1956. It was not until the attack outside a synagogue in Rue Copernic in 1980 that 'the opening salvo in a long campaign by foreign terrorists whose purpose was to influence French policy on the Middle East' would begin.<sup>114</sup> And, in fact, up until this instance, '[n]one of the various French intelligence and police agencies had given any warning that such attacks were imminent or even possible. They were, moreover, unable to immediately identify the attacks as coming from foreign terrorists, despite the perpetrators wanting them to know'.<sup>115</sup> In the following years, France overhauled its national security capabilities considering worries over their large expatriate Muslim community, notably Algerians. As a result, both the *Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage* (SDECE) and the *Direction du Surveillance Territoire* (DST) were steadfast to meet the Islamist challenge and quickly banned and deported radical Imams and Islamist extremists that came under their radar, or so it appeared, once havoc was unleashed within France, in the 1990s.<sup>116</sup> The French government's known support in the ousting of the FIS in Algeria, in 1992, would trigger Islamist extremists in France, now considered a prime target by the GIA, particularly, but also al-Qaeda. To this effect, and with the benefit of hindsight, a leading al-Qaeda Syrian born ideologue and strategist, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, who married a Spanish woman, would admit, in 2005, that 'he advised the commander of the GIA, Abu Abdullah Ahmad and his superiors [sic] ... to strike deep inside the French mainland'.<sup>117</sup> In addition he further suggested the London underground as a suitable target.<sup>118</sup> Throughout the 1990s French

<sup>112</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terrorist Networks*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 122

<sup>113</sup> David Martin Jones & M.L.R. Smith, 'Greetings from the Cybercaliphate', *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5, (2005), p. 927

<sup>114</sup> Jeremy Shapiro, & Benedicte Suzan, 'The French Experience of Counter-terrorism', *Survival*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003), p. 67

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> See, e.g., Ibid, p. 67; cf: Richard Deacon, *The French Secret Service* (London: Grafton Books, 1990), p. 324

<sup>117</sup> Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of al-Qaeda* (London: Abacus, 2007), p. 229

<sup>118</sup> Ibid



intelligence and security services became alarmed by the laxity with which the UK government and its intelligence and security authorities guarded against what they viewed as an evolving threat to the UK homeland. Even more after UK intelligence agencies and police officials acknowledged the UK homeland was being used for terrorism activities, but discarded these individuals as posing ‘a threat to UK national security, and so there was no attempt to intervene and prevent their activities’.<sup>119</sup> British multiculturalism was viewed as a source of weakness meant to be exploited by the Islamist extremists, just as Qutbism had proclaimed in the 1950s and 1960s. In this respect, Jones and Smith are correct in their criticism levied at the British government, since ‘[i]t is deluded and deeply contradictory to prosecute the foot-soldiers of Islamism abroad while allowing key elements of its command and control to flourish among migrant and minority communities at home, even perversely celebrating it as part of a post-national British diversity’.<sup>120</sup> The evidence clearly suggests the British government’s stance was to strain cooperation between its security authorities and the French, particularly in 1995.

### ***Complacency, arrogance or something else? Western intelligence at work***

In judging intelligence analysts’ performance, historian Ernest May concluded that their ‘ability to interpret other people’s politics’ is always limited. Their easiest course is to assume that another government [or group] will do tomorrow what they did yesterday, and ninety times out of a hundred events justify such an assumption’.<sup>121</sup> However, in evaluating some intelligence analysts’ performance pre-9/11 the review conducted reflected shortcomings in the level of professional effort. The loss in 1979 and in 1983 of two of the best CIA Middle East analysts (Robert C. Ames and William Buckley) would severely hamper the CIA’s predictive trend analysis from that region, though certainly, prediction failures cannot be blamed exclusively on such losses, considering the sheer size of the CIA’s human and material capital. But Russell does question analysts’ level of expertise even when under these extraordinary capabilities since ‘the CIA has traditionally done a poor job of recruiting, nurturing, and maintaining nationally or internationally recognized experts in its analytic ranks’.<sup>122</sup> All assumptions considered, the 1993 WTC bombing, the 1994 Air France plane hijacking, the 1995 slaying of a moderate Algerian Imam and subsequent havoc and bombings of the metro in Paris, should have pointed Western intelligence services to a catharsis in both the *modus* and *locus operandi* of the Islamist extremist threat. In fact,

French authorities, for example, believe that, while “professional” terrorists may have perpetrated the initial bombings, like-minded “amateurs”—that is, entirely self-motivated operatives or unsophisticated imitators drawn from France’s large

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<sup>119</sup> Peter Gill & Mark Pythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 122

<sup>120</sup> David Martin Jones & M.L.R. Smith, ‘Greetings from the Cybercaliphate’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5, (2005), p 929

<sup>121</sup> Ernest R. May (1984), ‘Capabilities & Proclivities’ in *Knowing One’s Enemies: Intelligence Assessment before the Two World Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 538 in Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 43

<sup>122</sup> Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 120; see also, pp. 120-132

and increasingly restive Algerian expatriate community—were responsible for at least some of the subsequent attacks.<sup>123</sup>

Lacking advance warning as to the intentions and capabilities of an adversary may explain the inability to counter a threat, but as Hoffman noted, '[o]n 1 July, for example, an Algerian newspaper (La Tribune) reported that a five-man GIA team had left Bosnia to begin operations in France'.<sup>124</sup> French intelligence however, disregarded this advance warning. Similarly, Australian intelligence monitored Islamist terrorist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf in Indonesia, but the emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) did not register on its radar screen until post-9/11.<sup>125</sup> This is an interesting occurrence since JI emerged 'as a local Indonesian group but expanded in the 1990s into a regional organisation extending from southern Thailand to Australia'.<sup>126</sup> In addition, its leaders were co-opted by al-Qaeda who provided training and finance.

So was the failure to identify properly and forecast some terrorist attacks in the run up to and in the aftermath of that on 9/11 due to complacency, arrogance or something else? Certainly al-Qaeda got a head start when, according to CIA case officer Melissa Boyle, an al-Qaeda operative surrendered information about an impending attack on the US embassy in Nairobi, but his claim was considered a fabrication.<sup>127</sup> On the other hand, arrests in London by UK authorities of al-Qaeda-linked individuals in 1998 and new counter-terrorism legislations in the US prove Western national security authorities were not completely oblivious to the growing threat.<sup>128</sup> What can be inferred is that the threat was guarded against improperly and this reflected the low esteem in the degree of danger the threat posed, which in turn questions the validity of the intelligence cycle as an effective intelligence process.

Nonetheless, developing events along with the known schism identified within the Muslim world elevated Western intelligence and security concerns over growing anti-Western sentiment by Muslim extremists directed at Western countries. French authorities were dismayed at the British government's refusal to extradite Rashid Ramdan, a key figure in the Paris metro bombings.<sup>129</sup> This evidence is consistent with Jones and Smith's previous critique when they claimed that 'British authorities displayed a studied indifference towards

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<sup>123</sup> See, e.g., Susan Bell, '16 Hurt in Paris nail-bomb blast', *The Times* (August 18, 1995); 'Paris faces autumn of terror as fifth bomb is discovered' (5 September 1995)

<sup>124</sup> Bruce Hoffman, 'Intelligence & Terrorism: Emerging Threats and New Security Challenges in the Post-Cold War Era', *Intelligence & National Security*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1996), p. 208

<sup>125</sup> Philip Flood, 'Report of the Inquiry into Australian Intelligence Agencies' (Canberra: Australian Government, July 22, 2004), p. 177; cf: Peter McLoughlin, 'Was there a failure of intelligence communities to identify and cope with the nature of threats in the post-Cold War era?', *King's College London*, unpublished document, p. 3

<sup>126</sup> Rohan Gunaratna 'the links that bind terrorist groups', *the Guardian* (October 15, 2002)

<sup>127</sup> Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial & Deception: An Insider's View of the CIA from the Iran-Contra to 9/11* (New York: Nation Books, 2004), p. 273; in Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 62

<sup>128</sup> See, e.g., US Antiterrorism & Effective Death Penalty 1996.

<sup>129</sup> Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: the Search for the New Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) p. 106; cf: Dominique Thomas, *Le Londonistan: la Voix du Djihad* (Paris: Michalon, 2002)

this developing transnational phenomenon, both during the 1990s and even after 9/11'.<sup>130</sup> The fact that Algerian journalist Mohammed Sifaoui penetrated, in 2002, an al-Qaeda cell discovering that 'Euro-Islamists consistently looked to London for guidance after the French began deporting radical clerics',<sup>131</sup> gives much credence to their argument. The threat from Islamist extremism remained high in Western homelands. So much so that in 1995, NATO Secretary General Willy Claes, declared that Islamic fundamentalism was 'at least as dangerous as communism' had been to the West.<sup>132</sup> The strength of this statement, as biased as it may seem, spells out the degree of concern this threat posed within the international community. A figure that illustrates this concern is the increase in US counter-terrorism spending, which doubled to \$10 billion for fiscal year 2000 when compared to that of 1994.<sup>133</sup>

Both the CIA and FBI had been tracking bin Laden for some time, though first learned of al-Qaeda from a Sudanese defector in 1996,<sup>134</sup> by which time war had been declared on the US. That year the Khobar towers complex in SA was bombed, then US embassies in Africa in 1998, the USS Cole in 2000, and finally, 9/11, 2001 occurred. Based on a RAND Terrorism Incident Database finding, conventional wisdom held that until 9/11,

terrorists were interested not in killing, but in publicity. Violence was employed less as a means of wreaking death and destruction than as a way to appeal to and attract supporters, focus attention on the terrorists and their causes, or attain tangible political aims or concessions.... [They] believed that only if their violence was calculated or regulated would they be able to obtain the popular support or international recognition they craved or achieve the political ends that they desired. They therefore would neither carry out mass casualty attacks using conventional weapons nor use CBRN weapons simply because there was little reason to kill en masse when the death of a handful of people often sufficed.<sup>135</sup>

Several US intelligence reports however, point out to a heightened alert effort commensurate with the latest developments pre-9/11.<sup>136</sup> Even Sandy Berger, ex-Clinton National Security

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid

<sup>131</sup> David Martin Jones & M.L.R. Smith, 'Greetings from the Cybercaliphate', *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5, (2005), p. 944

<sup>132</sup> Willy Claes quoted in 'Muslim Militancy is Next Big Threat, Says NATO Chief', *The Times*, 3 February 3 1995; cf: Fred Halliday in Akbar S. Ahmed & Hastings Donnan, Eds., *Islam, Globalization & Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994)

<sup>133</sup> Steven Simon & Daniel Benjamin, 'America & the New Terrorism', *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2000), p. 59

<sup>134</sup> See, e.g., Ben Fenton, 'Bin Laden wanted to behead the US snake', *The Telegraph* (19 June, 2001) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/yemen/1321715/Bin-Laden-%27wanted-to-behead-the-US-snake%27.html> (Accessed June 13, 2008)

<sup>135</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 269

<sup>136</sup> See, e.g., 'Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future With Nongovernment Experts' (2000) *CLA*, <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/terrorism-related-excerpts-from-global-trends-2015-a-dialogue-about-the-future-with-nongovernment-experts.html> (Accessed December 29, 2007), p. 50 and George Tenet, 'Current & Projected National Security Threats', Statement by acting Director of Central Intelligence before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing on Current & Projected National

Advisor, briefed Condoleezza Rice in January 2001 stating he believed the 'Bush Administration would spend more time on terrorism generally, and on al-Qaeda, specifically, than [on] any other subject'.<sup>137</sup> So, was there then a failure of intelligence to identify the nature of the threat? The answer must be no, Western intelligence services did identify the nature of the threat, but failed to effectively persuade policymakers of the impact and dangers its deterritorialized nature posed by not bringing to relevance an intelligence discourse that had identified it as the main threat. While identification of the nature of a threat is an important piece of the intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination process *it is not enough* to counter a threat. As stated earlier, in the field of intelligence, knowledge is power insofar as such power is applied 'on the basis of brevity, timeliness and relevance *in that order* [italics in original]'.<sup>138</sup> Relevant intelligence, for whatever reason, did not register in policymakers' agendas. Since an evident breakdown in this order of work occurred, it must then be concluded that there was in fact, an intelligence failure. The intelligence cycle begins and ends with policymakers *who are responsible* for establishing the *requirements* by which intelligence services ought to prioritize accordingly. However, as Laqueur observed as early as 1985, '... it has frequently been found that these systems of priorities work poorly...'.<sup>139</sup> Arthur Hulnick agrees with Laqueur in this respect. For Hulnick the intelligence cycle is flawed because

[p]olicy officials rarely give collection guidance. Collection and analysis, which are supposed to work in tandem, in fact work more properly in parallel. Finally, the idea that decision makers wait for the delivery of intelligence before making policy decisions is equally incorrect. In the modern era, policy officials seem to want intelligence to support policy rather than to inform it. The Intelligence Cycle also fails to consider either counter-intelligence or covert action. Taken as a whole, the cycle concept is a flawed model, but nevertheless continues to be taught in the US and around the world.<sup>140</sup>

This is, clearly, the Achilles heel and the linchpin of the intelligence producer-consumer problematic because it is assumed policymakers have foreknowledge of what the nature of the threat actually is. When in fact they do know, yet fail to react expediently, two different and not necessarily mutually exclusive dynamics may unfold; One is the politicization of intelligence; the other *discourse failure*.<sup>141</sup> The interplay of the two dynamics unfortunately,

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Security Threats to the United States, *CLA*, (1997), [https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/1997/dci\\_testimony\\_020597.html](https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/1997/dci_testimony_020597.html) (Accessed December 29, 2007)

<sup>137</sup> Michael Elliott, Michael, 'They had a Plan', *Time Magazine* (August 4, 2002) <http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101020812/story.html>, para. 6 (Accessed June 19, 2008)

<sup>138</sup> Arthur S. Hulnick, 'The Intelligence Producer-Consumer Linkage', *Intelligence & National Security*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1986), p. 227

<sup>139</sup> Walter Laqueur, *A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1985), p. 93-94 in Peter McLoughlin, 'In judging the performance of any intelligence organisation we need first to come to a realistic understanding of the limits of intelligence', *King's College London*, unpublished document (2008), p. 5

<sup>140</sup> Arthur S. Hulnick, 'What's Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 21, No. 6 (2006), p. 959

<sup>141</sup> Peter Neumann & M.L.R. Smith, 'Missing the Plot? Intelligence & Discourse Failure', *Orbis*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Winter 2005), pp. 95-107

caused the intelligence cycle breakdown, which in turn ‘reflected a broader atmosphere of complacency at work in the West that disregarded the nature of the threat’.<sup>142</sup> As Peter McLoughlin argues ‘though [DCI] George Tenet issued a 1998 directive ordering the CIA to spare no resources on the war with al-Qaeda, at the time of the 9/11 attacks the CIA had only five analysts working on al-Qaeda (out of a workforce of 17,000 people)’.<sup>143</sup> Similar shortcomings plagued other Western intelligence services’ analyses, including the French, who only had some foreknowledge of an impending attack. The atmosphere of complacency was an intangible projection of the success of the socio-economic and material prosperity spreading in Western countries throughout the pre-9/11 world and the broader post-Cold War era, which caused a dysfunction in Western perceptual psyche with regard to the capability of the terrorist threat. As Michael Herman explained “People act and react according to their images of the environment”; there is “the distortion of reality caused by attitudes, values and beliefs”; “the discrepancy between image and reality is partly the result of physical impediments to the flow of information owing to lack of time, faulty communications, censorship or lack of competent advisors or intelligence sources.”<sup>144</sup> This compelling instance proves that policymakers and even intelligence and ‘the individuals involved in its creation and interpretation are not only exposed to the internal machinations of their respective institutions, but also influences from the society at large’.<sup>145</sup> As Neumann and Smith explain,

*[d]iscourse failure* is not a theoretical notion that exists only as a debating point; but had practical effects that crucially influenced decision-making. It explains how politicians came to obscure the nature of the Islamist extremism in a way that inhibited proper threat perceptions before the growing peril. This, in turn, impacted upon intelligence services’ capability, restricting their room to maneuver and hampering their efforts to respond in a manner commensurate with the degree of danger.<sup>146</sup>

Neumann and Smith’s conclusion that *discourse failure* is the missing dimension of intelligence failure is consistent with the dynamics that led to a breakdown in the intelligence cycle throughout the pre-9/11 world and the greater post-Cold War era. Allegations raised against both the Clinton and Bush administrations with regard to the dysfunction of intelligence performance over which they presided, emphasize that if the mindset of the parties involved in the intelligence cycle systematically ignores ‘the dominant debates in a given society... this

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 95

<sup>143</sup> Peter McLoughlin, ‘In judging the performance of any intelligence organisation we need first to come to a realistic understanding of the limits of intelligence’, *King’s College London*, unpublished document (2008), p. 6; for DCI Directive see ‘House-Senate Joint Inquiry Report on Intelligence Community Activities before and after 9/11’ (December, 2002), p. 40 <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/creports/pdf/fullreport.pdf> (Accessed December 30, 2007); for CIA figures see, e.g., Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 1

<sup>144</sup> K. J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1983), pp. 319-320 in Michael Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace & War* (London: RIIA, 1996), pp. 368-369

<sup>145</sup> Peter Neumann & M.L.R. Smith, ‘Missing the Plot? Intelligence & Discourse Failure’, *Orbis*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Winter 2005), p. 97

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p. 96

will create negative outcomes at all stages of the intelligence cycle'.<sup>147</sup> In this regard, '[e]vidence on the public record indicates that intelligence [in fact] communicated clearly and often in the months before 11 September the judgment that the likelihood of a major al-Qa'ida terrorist attack *within* the United States was high and rising'.<sup>148</sup> In hindsight, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw acknowledged that '... the evidence was very, very clear that the al-Qa'eda organisation, and Osama bin Laden in particular, was becoming increasingly emboldened by the lack of reaction and the lack of precaution ...'.<sup>149</sup> This emboldening was motivated primarily by the US government's embarrassing withdrawal from Somalia. In an interview Abdel Bari Atwan held with bin Laden that illustrates this fact, bin Laden admitted that his Afghan Arabs had been involved in the 1993 ambush of American troops in Mogadishu ... while warlord Mohammed Faraj Aidid was blamed instead.<sup>150</sup>

The wrong mind-set led to common perceptual obstacles in intelligence (e.g., mirror imaging; the 'wasn't invented here' syndrome; groupthink; and cry-wolf syndrome). Policy makers failed to register the likelihood of such astonishing, though conceivable surprise attack because they believed they themselves would not do it or could not happen in the US. In addition, the competitive nature of US intelligence agencies points to an individual corporate mentality that hindered cooperation with other agencies; for example, 'the FBI's failure to pass on a field agent's reports about the flying school activities of Islamic radicals'.<sup>151</sup> Further, Richard Clarke's attempts to alert the Bush administration of the gravity of the threat were systematically disregarded as the official was perceived as purveying the cry-wolf syndrome.<sup>152</sup> In this context, Hoffman argues US,

counterterrorism efforts' focused too exclusively on either low-end threats posed by car or truck bombs against buildings' or on worse-case scenarios involving the use of WMD... This approach left a painfully vulnerable gap in our antiterrorism defenses, in which a traditional long-proved tactic—like airline hijacking—was neglected in favor of other, less conventional threats and in which the consequences of using aircraft as a suicide weapon seemed to have been ignored.<sup>153</sup>

In fact, as Monica Czwaro suggested, 'the Clinton administration did lean heavily on the threat from WMD, which prompted the academic community [as well as the intelligence

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, p. 97

<sup>148</sup> Jack Davis, 'Strategic Warning: If Surprise is Inevitable, What Role for Analysis?', *The Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis*, Occasional Papers: Volume 2, Number 1 (January, 2003) <https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers/pdf/OPV2No1.pdf> (Accessed December 28, 2007), p. 5

<sup>149</sup> Foreign Secretary Jack Straw quoted in Anton La Guardia, 'We should have hit al-Qa'eda sooner', *The Daily Telegraph* (March 20, 2004), p. 2  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;jsessionid=Z3GPSLNWTKKIPQFIQMFCEFFOAVCBQYIV0?xml=/news/2004/03/20/nstraw120.xml&page=2> (Accessed December 29, 2007)

<sup>150</sup> Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of al-Qaeda* (London: Abacus, 2007), p. 28-29

<sup>151</sup> Peter Neumann & M.L.R. Smith, 'Missing the Plot? Intelligence & Discourse Failure', *Orbis*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Winter 2005), p. 96

<sup>152</sup> See, e.g., *ibid*, p. 101

<sup>153</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 280



community] to spend a lot of [valuable] time debating the less likely threat'.<sup>154</sup> Hoffman and Czwarno prove here the Clinton administration's shortcomings in terms of effecting intelligence requirements commensurate with the level of threat.

The reality is that on 9/11 a classic *tactical warning* failure occurred as a result of *discourse failure*. *Tactical warning's* goal, 'is identifying [the] *when, where, and how* a declared or potential adversary will strike the United States directly, mount a challenge to US interest abroad, or make a weapons breakthrough'.<sup>155</sup> For example, as when the discovery of "Oplan Bojinka"—an operation to destroy eleven US airliners over the Pacific, to crash an explosive laden aircraft on to the Pentagon and CIA headquarters and assassinate President Clinton and Pope John Paul in Manila [was uncovered in 1995].<sup>156</sup> Simultaneously, it may be arguable whether or not a *strategic warning* failure occurred as well since, '*strategic warning* aims for analytic perception and effective communication to policy officials of important changes in the character or level of security threats that require re-evaluation of US readiness to deter, avert, or limit damage—well in advance of incident-specific indicators'.<sup>157</sup> Advanced *strategic warning* was issued, yet this did not produce any practical results as far as effective countermeasures. It may be argued then that policymakers ignored for an extended period of time and for whatever reasons, *strategic intelligence* that pointed in fact to 'the 'big picture' of the evolving threat. As Berkowitz and Goodman note, 'strategic intelligence is designed to provide officials with the 'big picture' and long range forecasts they need in order to plan for the future'.<sup>158</sup> Policymakers' disregard for *strategic intelligence* is evidenced in the fact that *strategic warning* was issued yet not acted on appropriately.

The al-Qaeda global network is an apocalyptic terrorist organization with a horizontal-vertical structure and a multidimensional approach as its strategy, challenging its adversaries, both Muslim and Western, on military, political and socio-economic fronts. Its flawed misrepresentation of Islam must be countered from an ideological point of view in order to cut its appeal. Without addressing this part of the equation, Western intelligence is left, despite all efforts, with nothing less than a crystal ball to forecast future terrorist acts. The singularity of the Spanish position with regard to counter-terrorism mentions some respect since Spanish political elites, law enforcement and security intelligence services, have come to understand, according to Conde and Gonzalez, that 'terrorism is not a conjunctural phenomenon but a structural one, and as a result, it cannot be confronted militarily (as in the US) or with exceptional and extraordinary norms (as in the UK), but through [appropriately

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<sup>154</sup> Monica Czwarno, 'Misjudging Islamic Terrorism: the Academic Community's failure to Predict 9/11', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 29, No. 7 (October 1, 2006), p. 670

<sup>155</sup> Jack Davis, 'Improving CIA Analytic Performance: Strategic Warning', *The Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis*, Occasional Papers: Volume 1, Number 1 (September 2002), p. 2-3, <https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers/pdf/OPNo1.pdf> (Accessed December 28, 2007)

<sup>156</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qa'eda*, (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 6

<sup>157</sup> Jack Davis, 'Strategic Warning: If Surprise is Inevitable, What Role for Analysis?', *The Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis*, Occasional Papers: Volume 2, Number 1 (January, 2003) <https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers/pdf/OPV2No1.pdf> (Accessed December 28, 2007), p. 3

<sup>158</sup> Bruce D. Berkowitz & Allan E. Goodman, *Strategic Intelligence for American National Security* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 4

balanced foreign policy and] ordinary legislation in compliance of the rule of law'.<sup>159</sup> As a result, Spain's law enforcement and security-intelligence services have found in the legal principles that underpin Spanish counter-terrorism practices a successful tool to counter both Basque terrorism as well as Islamist terrorism. The experience did come, nonetheless, at a considerable price in terms of lives lost as a result of the Madrid terrorist attacks on March 11 2004. Although casualties in the 11 March 2004 attacks in Madrid were attributed in first instance to ETA and subsequently to the al-Qaeda affiliated branch, Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group *Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain* (GICM), or even to an offshoot organization of the GICM, *Salafiya Jihadia*, the final ruling for the trial of the 11-M attacks concluded in 2007 the initial hypotheses were incorrect. The Court based its ruling on the fact that, although Hassan el-Haski, one of the indicted terrorists, was a leading figure within GICM, this instance did not substantively and necessarily prove a chain-of-command structure existed linking GICM to 11-M, and thence released him from the charges of inducing to commit terrorist activities.<sup>160</sup>

Because citizens' lives are on the line, policymakers bare much responsibility for the failure to analyze historical trends appropriately, for the failure of prediction, and finally for the failure to effect appropriate intelligence *requirements*. Astonishingly, although strategic warning was indeed issued,<sup>161</sup> as a result of identifying the nature of the terrorist threat, 'no comprehensive intelligence assessment of al-Qaeda was drafted until after September 11'.<sup>162</sup> In an effort to palliate flaws in predictive analyses that lead to *historical discontinuity* failure and blur the quality of the working relationship between policymakers and intelligence analysts, Robert Jervis issued certain recommendations as far as US intelligence is concerned, in the aftermath of Iranian forecasting failure. Amongst them he included,

constant training of analysts, development of specialization and expertise, alternative and competing analyses, greater contact with outside experts, and an intellectual environment in which analysts could discuss and criticize each other's views, rewarding them for being first-rate analysts rather than forcing them to become second-rate managers to make career advances.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Enrique A. Conde & Hortensia González, 'Legislación antiterrorista comparada después de los atentados del 11 de septiembre y su incidencia en el ejercicio de los derechos fundamentales', *Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estratégicos*, ARI No. 7 (February 19, 2006), p. 2

<sup>160</sup> 'El Tribunal del 11-M desbarata la tesis clave de la versión oficial en su sentencia', *El Mundo* (November 5, 2007), <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2007/11/05/espana/1194233049.html> (accessed November 1, 2008)

<sup>161</sup> See, e.g., Jack Davis, 'Strategic Warning: If Surprise is Inevitable, What Role for Analysis?', *The Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis*, Occasional Papers: Volume 2, Number 1 (January, 2003) <https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers/pdf/OPV2No1.pdf> (Accessed December 28, 2007), p. 3

<sup>162</sup> Daniel Byman, 'Strategic Surprise and the September 11 Attacks,' *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2005), p. 157, in Peter McLoughlin, 'Was there a failure of intelligence communities to identify and cope with the nature of threats in the post-Cold War era?', *King's College London*, unpublished document (2008), p. 6

<sup>163</sup> Robert Jervis (1986), 'What is Wrong with the Intelligence Process?', *International Journal of Intelligence & Counterintelligence*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1986), p. 32 in Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 148



Just as in the mid-1980s, in the aftermath of 9/11, the CIA and some of its Western counterparts, have dismissed these calls for action, even while duplicating their size and budgets, freezing cognitive imbalances for the sake of the compartmentalization and self-sufficiency of each of their respective professions. It continues to be business as usual.

### ***Conclusion: the extent of failure***

To the extent that Western intelligence did identify the true nature of the Islamist terrorist threat, it is not solely responsible for the overall intelligence failure. Several factors caused the forecasting failure of the attacks that occurred on 9/11 and its aftermath: First, failure to identify a *historical discontinuity* event resulted not from failure of intelligence services in collection, but in analysis and only to the extent that intelligence officials were unable to persuade policymakers to accept an intelligence discourse that had identified the Islamist terrorist threat as the main threat. Further, to the extent that the intelligence cycle is considered to be flawed by both Laqueur and Hulnick, Western intelligence services' performance based on the intelligence cycle, cannot be an adequate evaluation barometer. The failure to provide adequate political intelligence stems not from Western intelligence services' failure of analysis but in the failure of policymakers to deliver a clear prioritization of requirements which should have included appropriate analyses of the impact of the socio-political schism within the realm of Islam that reflected Islamist extremists began international operations as opposed to local and regional, particularly against Western interests and in Western homelands. Failure to provide adequate political intelligence came as a result of intelligence, like any other social entity's interaction with the dynamics of its environment and all that surrounds it; in this case, the processes of globalization and modernity and their impact on the human psyche and human relations at all levels, including personal, social and professional.

Throughout the pre-9/11 world and the greater post-Cold War era socio-economic and political factors, which conveyed a certain degree of complacency, affected the psychological perceptions of policymakers, intelligence officials, and some in academia with access to intelligence, preventing them from bringing to relevance evidence that identified religious inspired terrorism and particularly Islamist extremism as the main evolving threat. These dynamics led to a systemic breakdown of intelligence services' performance capabilities, irrespective of how they are defined or measured, since 'the public record indicates that (1) strategic warning was given, (2) warning was received, (3) warning was believed. Yet commensurate protective measures were not taken'.<sup>164</sup> While *tactical warning* may have its limitations when attempting to uncover a surprise attack, *discourse failure* prevented adequate *strategic warning* to be produced and, as a result, caused *historical discontinuity*.

*Discourse failure* points directly to the Achilles heel of the intelligence producer-consumer problematic, where a revision of both the role of the analyst and the level of engagement between the policymaker, the analyst, and academia, is needed. For all the

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<sup>164</sup> Jack Davis, 'Strategic Warning: If Surprise is Inevitable, What Role for Analysis?', *The Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis*, Occasional Papers: Volume 2, Number 1 (January, 2003) <https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers/pdf/OPV2No1.pdf> (Accessed December 28, 2007),

bureaucratic shortcomings, however, while consolation may rest with the fact that surprise attacks are by definition unavoidable, this reality cannot be accepted as ‘... a master escape clause for intelligence officials to rationalize away major strategic intelligence failures’.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Richard L. Russell, *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence: Why the CIA gets it Wrong?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 18