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Definition of Terrorism

"the unlawful use of -- or threatened use of -- force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."

-- U.S. Department of Defense publication

In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S., the threat of militant Islamic terrorism -- rooted in the Middle East and South Asia -- has taken center stage. While these extremely violent religious extremists represent a minority view, their threat is real. As pointed out by RAND's Bruce Hoffman, in 1980 two out of 64 groups were categorized as largely religious in motivation; in 1995 almost half of the identified groups, 26 out of 56, were classified as religiously motivated; the majority of these espoused Islam as their guiding force.

To better understand the roots and threat of militant Islam, here's a closer look at how modern terrorism has evolved in the Middle East and South Asia.

The colonial era, failed post-colonial attempts at state formation, and the creation of Israel engendered a series of Marxist and anti-Western transformations and movements throughout the Arab and Islamic world. The growth of these nationalist and revolutionary movements, along with their view that terrorism could be effective in reaching political goals, generated the first phase of modern international terrorism.

In the late 1960s Palestinian secular movements such as Al Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) began to target civilians outside the immediate arena of conflict. Following Israel's 1967 defeat of Arab forces, Palestinian leaders realized that the Arab world was unable to militarily confront Israel. At the same time, lessons drawn from revolutionary movements in Latin America, North Africa, Southeast Asia as well as during the Jewish struggle against Britain in Palestine, saw the Palestinians move away from classic guerrilla, typically rural-based, warfare toward urban terrorism. Radical Palestinians took advantage of modern communication and transportation systems to internationalize their struggle. They launched a series of hijackings, kidnappings, bombings, and shootings, culminating in the kidnapping and subsequent deaths of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympic games.

These Palestinian groups became a model for numerous secular militants, and offered lessons for subsequent ethnic and religious movements. Palestinians created an extensive transnational extremist network -- tied into which were various state sponsors such as the Soviet Union, certain Arab states, as well as traditional criminal organizations. By the end of the 1970s, the Palestinian secular network was a major channel for the spread of terrorist techniques worldwide.

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Key Characteristics

The 1970s - Groups focus on material damage and limited attacks aimed at killing individuals while an increasing number of urban incidents, using lessons from guerrilla conflicts elsewhere, occur.

The 1980s - A distinct move toward urban-based attacks with a subsequent increase in collateral casualties as well as a change in targeting methodology; civilians become the target. Superpower conflict in Afghanistan becomes a formative period in the proliferation of weapons and emergence of militant, fundamentalist Islam.

The 1990s - The trend toward directly targeting civilians continues, and gains even greater currency as ethno-nationalist, religious, and religio-nationalist actors fill the void left by the demise or decrease in leftist organizations. The end of the Cold War and the creation of new states, the leaving of certain states in unstable or anarchic conditions, give impetus to the rise of a new set of extremists whose ideology or motivations allow, or even call for, indiscriminate targeting.

### Key Radical Palestinian Groups

(descriptions taken directly from the U.S. State Department publication "[Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2000](#)")

- **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP):** The PFLP, one of the original members of the PLO, [1] is a Marxist-Leninist group founded in 1967 by George Habash. The group was against the 1993 Declaration of Principles; participation in the PLO was also suspended. Participated in meetings with Arafat's Fatah party and PLO representatives in 1999 to discuss national unity but continues to oppose negotiations with Israel. Committed numerous international terrorist attacks during the 1970s, has allegedly been involved in attacks against Israel since the beginning of the second intifadah in September 2000. Syria has been a key source of safe haven and limited logistical support.
- **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC):** This group, led by Ahmed Jibril, split from the PFLP in 1968, wanting to focus more on terrorist than political action; violently opposed to the PLO and is closely tied to Syria and Iran. The PFLP-GC conducted multiple attacks in Europe and the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. Unique in that it conducted cross-border operations against Israel using unusual means, including hot-air balloons and motorized hang gliders. Currently focused on small-scale attacks in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip.
- **Abu Nidal Organization (ANO):** Anti-Western and anti-Israel international terrorist organization led by Sabri al-Banna; left the PLO in 1974. Organizational structure composed of various functional committees, including political, military, and financial. The ANO has carried out terrorist attacks in 20 countries, killing or injuring almost 900 persons. Targets have included the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, moderate Palestinians, the PLO, and various Arab countries. Major attacks included the Rome and Vienna airports in December 1985, the Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul and the Pan Am flight 73 hijacking in Karachi in September 1986, and the City of Poros day-excursion ship attack in Greece in July 1988. Suspected of assassinating PLO deputy chief Abu Iyad and PLO security chief Abu Hul in Tunis in January 1991. ANO assassinated a Jordanian diplomat in Lebanon in January 1994. Has not attacked Western targets since the late 1980s. Al-Banna relocated to Iraq in December 1998, where the group maintains a presence. Financial problems and internal disorganization have reduced the group's capabilities; activities shut down in Libya and Egypt in 1999.

While these secular Palestinians dominated the scene during the 1970s, religious movements also grew. The failure of Arab nationalism in the 1967 war resulted in the strengthening of both progressive and extremist Islamic movements. In the Middle East, Islamic movements increasingly came into opposition with secular nationalism, providing an alternative source of social welfare and education in the vacuum left by the lack of government-led development -- a key example is The Muslim Brotherhood. Islamic groups were supported by anti-nationalist conservative regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, to counter the expansion of nationalist ideology. Yet political Islam, [2] more open to progressive change, was seen as a threat to conservative Arab regimes and thus support for more fundamentalist -- and extremist -- groups occurred to combat both nationalist and political Islamist movements.

Meanwhile, in Iran, a turn to revolutionary Shia Islam under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini further eroded the power and legitimacy of the U.S.-backed authoritarian Pahlavi regime, setting the stage for the Shah's downfall.

The year 1979 was a turning point in international terrorism. Throughout the Arab world and the West, the Iranian Islamic revolution sparked fears of a wave of revolutionary Shia Islam. Meanwhile, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent anti-Soviet mujahedeen war, lasting from 1979 to 1989, stimulated the rise and expansion of terrorist groups. Indeed, the growth of a post-jihad pool of well-trained, battle-hardened militants is a key trend in contemporary international terrorism and insurgency-related violence. Volunteers from various parts of the Islamic world fought in Afghanistan, supported by conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia. In Yemen, for instance, the Riyadh-backed Islamic Front was established to provide financial, logistical, and training support for Yemeni volunteers. So called "Arab-Afghans" have -- and are -- using their experience to support local

insurgencies in North Africa, Kashmir, Chechnya, China, Bosnia, and the Philippines.

In the West, attention was focused on state sponsorship, specifically the Iranian-backed and Syrian-supported Hezbollah; state sponsors' use of secular Palestinian groups was also of concern. [3] Hezbollah pioneered the use of suicide bombers in the Middle East, and was linked to the **1983 bombing and subsequent deaths of 241 U.S. marines in Beirut**, Lebanon, as well as multiple kidnappings of U.S. and Western civilians and government officials. Hezbollah remains a key trainer of secular, Shia, and Sunni movements. As revealed during the investigation into the 1988 bombing of **Pan Am Flight 103**, Libyan intelligence officers were allegedly involved with the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine -- General Command (PFLP-GC). Iraq and Syria were heavily involved in supporting various terrorist groups, with Baghdad using the Abu Nidal Organization on several occasions. State sponsors used terrorist groups to attack Israeli as well as Western interests, in addition to domestic and regional opponents. It should be noted that the American policy of listing state sponsors was heavily politicized, and did not include several countries -- both allies and opponents of Washington -- that, under U.S. government definitions, were guilty of supporting or using terrorism.

### Key Radical Religious Groups

(descriptions taken directly from the U.S. State Department publication "Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2000")

- **Hezbollah:** Radical Shia group formed in 1982 in Lebanon. Strongly anti-Western and anti-Israeli. Closely allied with, and often directed by, Iran but may have conducted operations that were not approved by Tehran. Known or suspected to have been involved in numerous anti-U.S. terrorist attacks, including the **suicide truck bombing of the U.S. Embassy** and **U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut** in October 1983 and the **U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut** in September 1984. Elements of the group were responsible for the **kidnapping and detention of U.S. and other Western hostages** in Lebanon. The group also attacked the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in 1992 and is a suspect in the 1994 bombing of the Israeli cultural center in Buenos Aires. Operates in the Bekaa Valley, the southern suburbs of Beirut, and southern Lebanon. Has established cells in Europe, Africa, South America, North America, and Asia. Receives substantial amounts of financial, training, weapons, explosives, political, diplomatic, and organizational aid from Iran and Syria.
- **Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ - Al-Jihad, Jihad Group, Islamic Jihad):** Egyptian group active since the late 1970s. The EIJ is apparently split into two factions: one led by Ayman al-Zawahiri - who currently is in Afghanistan and is a key leader in the Usama bin Laden (UBL) network - and the Vanguard of Conquest (Tala' al-Fateh) led by Ahmad Husayn Agiza. Abbud al-Zumar, leader of the original Jihad, is imprisoned in Egypt and recently joined the group's jailed spiritual leader, Shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman, in a call for a "peaceful front." The group's traditional goal is the overthrow of the Egyptian Government and creation of an Islamic state. Given its involvement with UBL, EIJ is likely increasingly willing to target U.S. interests. The group has threatened to strike the U.S. for its jailing of Shaykh al-Rahman and the arrests of EIJ cadres in Albania, Azerbaijan, and the United Kingdom..
- **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ):** The PIJ, emerging from radical Gazan Palestinians in the 1970s, is apparently a series of loosely affiliated factions rather than a cohesive group. The PIJ focus is the destruction of Israel and the creation of a Palestinian Islamic state. Due to Washington's support of Israel, the PIJ has threatened to strike American targets; the PIJ has not "specifically" conducted attacks against U.S. interests; Arab regimes deemed as un-Islamic are also threatened. The group has stated its willingness to hit American targets in Jordan. PIJ cadres reportedly receive funding from Tehran and logistical support from Syria.
- **Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS):** Emerging from the Muslim Brotherhood during the first Palestinian intifadah (1987), HAMAS has become the primary anti-Israeli religious opposition in the occupied territories. The group is mainly known for its use of suicide bombers and is loosely organized, with centers of strength in Gaza and certain areas in the West Bank. HAMAS, while condemning American policies favoring Israel, has not targeted the U.S. directly.
- **Al-Gamaat Al-Islamiyya (IG - the Islamic Group, al-Gama'at, Islamic Gama'at, Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya, GI):** The IG,

begun in the 1970s, is the largest of the Egyptian militant groups. Its core goal is the overthrow of the Cairo regime and creation of an Islamic state. The IG appears to be a more loosely organized entity than the EIJ, and maintains a globally present external wing. IG leadership signed Usama Bin Ladin's February 1998 anti-U.S. fatwa but has denied supporting UBL. Shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman is al-Gama'at's spiritual leader, and thus the U.S. has been threatened with attack. From 1993 until the cease-fire, al-Gama'a launched attacks on tourists in Egypt, most notably the attack in November 1997 at Luxor that killed 58 foreign tourists. Also claimed responsibility for the attempt in June 1995 to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Has a worldwide presence, including Sudan, the United Kingdom, Afghanistan, Austria, and Yemen. The Egyptian Government believes that Iran, Bin Ladin, and Afghan militant groups support the organization.

The disintegration of post-Cold War states, and the Cold War legacy of a world awash in advanced conventional weapons and know-how, has assisted the proliferation of terrorism worldwide. Vacuums of stability created by conflict and absence of governance in areas such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, Colombia, and certain African countries offer ready made areas for terrorist training and recruitment activity, while smuggling and drug trafficking routes are often exploited by terrorists to support operations worldwide. With the increasing ease of transnational transportation and communication, the continued willingness of states such as Iran and Iraq to provide support, and dehumanizing ideologies that enable mass casualty attacks, the lethal potential of terrorist violence has reached new heights.

The region of Afghanistan -- it is not a country in the conventional sense -- has, particularly since the 1989 Soviet withdrawal, emerged as a terrorist training ground. Pakistan, struggling to balance its needs for political-economic reform with a domestic religious agenda, provides assistance to terrorist groups both in Afghanistan and Kashmir while acting as a further transit area between the Middle East and South Asia.

Since their emergence in 1994, the Pakistani-supported Taliban militia in Afghanistan has assumed several characteristics traditionally associated with state-sponsors of terrorism, providing logistical support, travel documentation, and training facilities. Although radical groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda, and Kashmiri militants were in Afghanistan prior to the Taliban, the spread of Taliban control has seen Afghan-based terrorism evolve into a relatively coordinated, widespread activity focused on sustaining and developing terrorist capabilities. Since the mid-1990s, Pakistani-backed terrorist groups fighting in Kashmir have increasingly used training camps inside Taliban-controlled areas. At the same time, members of these groups, as well as thousands of youths from Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), have fought with the Taliban against opposition forces. This activity has seen the rise of extremism in parts of Pakistan neighboring Afghanistan, further complicating the ability of Islamabad to exert control over militants. Moreover, the intermixing of Pakistani movements with the Taliban and their Arab-Afghan allies has seen ties between these groups strengthen.

Since 1989 the increasing willingness of religious extremists to strike targets outside immediate country or regional areas underscores the global nature of contemporary terrorism. The 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, and the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, are representative of this trend.

### Key Groups in the New Phase of Militant Islamic Terrorism

(descriptions taken directly from the U.S. State Department publication "Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2000")

- **Al-Qaeda (The Base):** Established by Usama Bin Ladin (UBL) circa 1990, Al Qaeda aims to coordinate a transnational mujahideen network; stated goal is to "reestablish the Muslim State" throughout the world via the overthrow of corrupt regimes in the Islamic world and the removal of foreign presence - primarily American and Israeli - from the Middle East. UBL has issued three anti-U.S. fatwas encouraging Muslims to take up arms against Washington's "imperialism." Al Qaeda provides financial, manpower, transportation, and training support to extremists worldwide. In February 1998 bin Ladin issued a statement under the banner of "The World Islamic Front for Jihad Against The Jews and

Crusaders," saying it was the duty of all Muslims to kill U.S. citizens, civilian or military, and their allies. Allegedly orchestrated the bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, on August 7, 1998. Claims to have been involved in the 1993 killing of U.S. servicemen in Somalia and the December 1992 bombings against U.S. troops in Aden, Yemen. Al Qaeda serves as the core of a loose umbrella organization that includes members of many Sunni Islamic extremist groups, including factions of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), the Gama'at al-Islamiyya (IG), and the Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM). The group is a prime suspect in the Sept. 11 attacks as well as the [U.S.S. Cole](#) bombing.

- **Armed Islamic Group (GIA):** Having initiated terrorist activities in 1992 following Algiers refusal to accept a democratically elected Islamist government, the GIA has conducted multiple mass killings of civilians and assassinations of Algerian leaders. While present in areas such as Yemen, the GIA reportedly does not target the U.S. directly. However, it is possible that GIA splinter movements or personnel may become involved in anti-U.S. action.
- **Aden-Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA):** The Aden-Abyan Islamic Army is allegedly affiliated to the Yemeni Islamic Jihad and has been implicated in acts of violence with the stated goal to "hoist the banner of al-Jihad, and fight secularism in Yemen and the Arab countries." Aden-Abyan Islamic Army leader Zein al-Abideen al-Mehdar was executed for participating in the December 1998 kidnapping of 16 Western tourists. Four of the hostages were killed and another 13 hostages were freed when Yemeni security forces attacked the place where the hostages were being held. In March 1999 the group warned the U.S. and British ambassadors in Yemen to leave immediately.
- **Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM):** Formerly part of the Harakat al-Ansar (HUA), the Pakistani-based HUM operates primarily in Kashmir. Long-time leader of the group, Fazlur Rehman Khalil, in mid-February stepped down; the popular Kashmiri commander and second-in-command, Farooq Kashmiri, assumed the reigns. Khalil, who has been linked to Bin Ladin and signed his fatwa in February 1998 calling for attacks on U.S. and Western interests, assumed the position of HUM Secretary General. The HUM is linked to the militant group al-Faran that kidnapped five Western tourists in Kashmir in July 1995; one was killed in August 1995 and the other four reportedly were killed in December of the same year. Supporters are mostly Pakistanis and Kashmiris and also include Afghans and Arab veterans of the Afghan war. The HUM trains its militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- **Jaish-e-Mohammed (Army of Mohammed):** The Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) has greatly expanded since Maulana Masood Azhar, a former ultra-fundamentalist Harakat ul-Ansar (HUA) leader, formed the group in February 2000. The group's aim is to unite Kashmir with Pakistan. It is politically aligned with the radical, pro-Taliban, political party, Jamiat-i Ulema-i Islam (JUI-F). The JEM maintains training camps in Afghanistan. Most of the JEM's cadre and material resources have been drawn from the militant groups Harakat ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI) and the Harakat ul-Mujahedin (HUM). The JEM has close ties to Afghan Arabs and the Taliban. Usama Bin Ladin is suspected of giving funding to the JEM. Group by this name claimed responsibility for the [USS Cole](#) attack.
- **Lashkar-i-Taiba (LT) (Army of the Righteous):** The LT is the armed wing of the Pakistan-based religious organization, Markaz-ud-Dawa-wal-Irshad (MDI)--a Sunni anti-U.S. missionary organization formed in 1989. One of the three largest and best-trained groups fighting in Kashmir against India, it is not connected to a political party. The LT leader is MDI chief, Professor Hafiz Mohammed Saeed. Almost all LT cadres are foreigners--mostly Pakistanis from seminaries across the country and Afghan veterans of the Afghan wars. The LT trains its militants in mobile training camps across Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Afghanistan.

#### [1] **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Al Fatah**

The PLO was founded in 1964 as a Palestinian nationalist umbrella organization committed to the creation of an independent Palestinian state. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, militia groups composing the PLO vied for control, with Al Fatah -- led by Yasser Arafat -- becoming dominant. Al Fatah joined the PLO in 1968 and won the leadership role in 1969. In 1969 Arafat

assumed the position of PLO Executive Committee chairman, a position he still holds. Al Fatah essentially became the PLO, with other groups' influence on PLO actions increasingly marginalized. Al Fatah and other PLO components were pushed out of Jordan following clashes with Jordanian forces in 1970-71. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 led to the group's dispersal to several Middle Eastern countries, including Tunisia, Yemen, Algeria, Iraq, and others. The PLO maintains several military and intelligence wings that have carried out terrorist attacks, including Force 17 and the Western Sector. Two of its leaders, Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, were assassinated in recent years. In the 1960s and the 1970s, Al Fatah offered training to a wide range of European, Middle Eastern, Asian, and African terrorist and insurgent groups and carried out numerous acts of international terrorism in Western Europe and the Middle East in the early-to-middle 1970s. Arafat signed the Declaration of Principles (DOP) with Israel in 1993 -- the Oslo Accords -- and renounced terrorism and violence. The organization fragmented in the early 1980s, but remained the leading Palestinian political organization. Following the 1993 Oslo Accords, the PLO -- read Al Fatah -- leadership assumed control of the nascent Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

#### [2] Political versus Fundamentalist Islam

Political Islam, as opposed to fundamentalist or neo-fundamentalist Islam, posits a worldview that can deal with and selectively integrate modernity. In contrast, fundamentalist Islam calls for a return to an ontological form of Islam that rejects modernity; groups such as Al Qaeda and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad are representative of fundamentalist Islam.

#### [3] A Note on State Sponsors of Religious Terror Groups

Unlike the "secular" national, radical, anarchist terrorism sponsored by states such as Libya, Syria, Iraq, Cuba, North Korea, and behind the scenes by the former Soviet camp, most of the Islamic terrorist groups have never been sponsored by states. Many Egyptian organizations emerged from the Egyptian domestic landscape. Algerian groups likewise were not sponsored by foreign states. Hezbollah certainly can be viewed as an Iranian surrogate, but other movements, while open to state assistance, remain operationally and ideologically independent.

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