Violence in the Name of the Faith

Religious Terrorism

OPENING VIEWPOINT: THE JOURNEY OF ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI

Religious extremism is a central attribute of the New Terrorism. It has become a binding ideology for many extremists, in part because it provides an uncomplicated sense of purpose and a clear worldview. But how do individuals come to adopt religious revolution as their primary purpose in life? What kind of personal journey leads them to view the world through the lens of religious intolerance?

The case of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is an important study of how young Muslims turn to jihad. During the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq after the invasion of March 2003, al-Zarqawi became a primary symbol of Islamist resistance. His likeness and name became as well known as Osama bin Laden’s, and he became synonymous with the type of adversary the United States expected to fight in the war on terrorism. Al-Zarqawi’s ideology encompassed fervent internationalism, believing that all Muslim-populated countries should be governed in accordance with Islamic law, and that jihad must be waged to protect the faith.

Born Ahmed Khalayleh in the Jordanian town of Zarqa (from which he adopted his name), al-Zarqawi was a young man who lived a fast and nonreligious life during his early years. He fought, drank alcohol, was heavily tattooed, dropped out of high school, and had a reputation for being incorrigible. However, he joined many other young men by volunteering to serve as a fighter in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan during the 1980s. It was during this service that al-Zarqawi began to become deeply religious by immersing himself in reading the Qur’an and accepting the worldview that the “Muslim nation” should be defended from nonbelievers. As was the case with many who served in Afghanistan, he returned home in 1992 with a global religious outlook.

In Jordan, al-Zarqawi became a follower of the radical cleric Sheikh Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi, a Palestinian who advocated the overthrow of all secular governments. Because of his association with al-Maqdisi, al-Zarqawi and other followers were jailed as political prisoners. During several years in prison, al-Zarqawi stood out as a temperamental leader who eventually eclipsed his mentor al-Maqdisi. He became a radical among radicals, arguably more extremist in his ideology than Osama bin Laden. To al-Zarqawi, all who did not share his interpretation of Islam were unbelievers and therefore enemies—even Shi’a Muslims were enemies.

After his release from prison in Jordan, he apparently drifted to Pakistan and then Afghanistan, where he allegedly had poor relations with Al-Qa’ida. Sometime around the time of the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, al-Zarqawi made his way to Iraq and eventually became a major symbol of Sunni Islamist resistance to the occupation. As a result, Osama bin Laden apparently solicited al-Zarqawi to put aside their differences, and they declared al-Zarqawi’s movement to be the Al-Qa’ida Organization for Holy War in Iraq. This movement became a prototypical predecessor for later Sunni Islamist movements such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).
In July 2005, al-Zarqawi announced on behalf of Al-Qaeda in Iraq that the organization would wage war against members of the Iraqi armed forces because they were “apostates,” as well as against the Badr Brigade (formally known as the Badr Organization), a powerful Shi’a militia. Despite a massive manhunt in Iraq and a $25 million bounty, al-Zarqawi managed to elude American forces until June 2006, when he was killed by an American air strike in a farmhouse near Baqubah.

Notes

a. The “ISIS” designation is derived from either “Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham” or “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.”

Terrorism in the name of religion has become the predominant model for political violence in the modern world. This is not to suggest that it is the only model, because nationalism and ideology remain as potent catalysts for extremist behavior. However, religious extremism has become a central issue for the global community.

In the modern era, religious terrorism has increased in its frequency, scale of violence, and global reach. At the same time, a relative decline has occurred in secular—nonreligious—terrorism. The old ideologies of class conflict, anticolonial liberation, and secular nationalism have been challenged by a new and vigorous infusion of sectarian (religious) ideologies. Grassroots extremist support for religious violence has been most widespread among populations living in repressive societies that do not permit demands for reform or other expressions of dissent. In this regard,

it is perhaps not surprising that religion should become a far more popular motivation for terrorism in the post–Cold War era as old ideologies lie discredited by the collapse of the Soviet Union and communist ideology, while the promise of munificent benefits from the liberal-democratic, capitalist state . . . fails to materialize in many countries throughout the world.¹

What is religious terrorism? What are its fundamental attributes? How is religion-inspired violence rationalized? Religious terrorism is a type of political violence that is motivated by an absolute belief that an otherworldly power has sanctioned—and commanded—the application of terrorist violence for the greater glory of the faith. Acts that are committed in the name of the faith will be forgiven by the otherworldly power and perhaps rewarded in an afterlife. In essence, one’s religious faith legitimizes violence so long as such violence is an expression of the will of one’s deity.

Table 6.1 presents a model that compares the fundamental characteristics of religious and secular terrorism. The discussion in this chapter will review the following:

- Primary and Secondary Motives: The Idiosyncratic Quality of Religious Terrorism
- Historical Cases in Point: Fighting, Dying, and Killing in the Name of the Faith
- State-Sponsored Religious Terrorism in the Modern Era
- Dissident Religious Terrorism in the Modern Era
- The Future of Religious Terrorism

Primary and Secondary Motives:
The Idiosyncratic Quality
of Religious Terrorism

Religious terrorism is an idiosyncratic type of terrorism; it originates from countless national, cultural, and historical contexts. Unlike secular terrorism, which usually has an inherent (but fringe) rationality, religious terrorism is often an expression of unquestioned faith in a supernatural purpose. It is, therefore, very much contingent on trends within specific religions, the historical experiences of ethnonational groups, and the unique political environments of nations. As a basis for terrorism, religious faith has been applied in different ways, depending on the cultural and political environments of each terrorist movement. In some environments, religion is the primary motive for terrorist behavior. In other contexts, it is a secondary motive that is part of an overarching cultural identity for politically violent movements.

As a primary motive, religion is at the very core of an extremist group’s political, social, and revolutionary agenda. Within this context, the religious belief system is the driving force behind the group’s behavior. Examples of this profile are found in the Middle East and elsewhere among jihadi Islamic fundamentalists, in India among Hindu extremists, and in the United States among violent Christian ant abiortionists. In the United States, the Army of God has expressed support for and advocated violent attacks against abortion clinics and providers. The following quotation is an excerpt from a declaration in “The Army of God Manual”:

We, the remnant of God-fearing men and women of the United States of Amerika [sic], do officially declare war on the entire child-killing industry. After praying, fasting, and making continual supplication to God for your pagan, heathen, infidel souls, we then peacefully, passively presented our bodies in front of your death camps, begging you to stop the mass murder of infants. . . . Yet you mocked God and continued the holocaust. . . . No longer! All of the options have expired. Our Most Dread Sovereign Lord God requires that whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed . . . we are forced to take arms against you. . . . You shall not be tortured at our hands. Vengeance belongs to God only. However, execution is rarely gentle.

As a secondary motive, religion represents one aspect of an extremist group’s overall identity and agenda. For many ethnonationalist and other revolutionary movements, national independence or some other degree of autonomy forms the primary motivation for their violent behavior. Religious affiliation can be important because it is an element of their ethnic or national identity, but their ultimate goal is grounded in their secular identity. Examples of this profile are found in Northern Ireland among Catholic and Protestant terrorists, in southern Sudan among Christians and believers in traditional faiths, and in pre-independence Palestine among Jewish terrorists. In Palestine, the Jewish terrorist group Lohmey Heruth Israel (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel)—commonly known as the Stern Gang—issued the following (mostly nationalistic) rationalization for the group’s violence against the British occupation of Palestine:

Now this is the law of our war. So long as there is fear in the heart of any Jew in the world, so long as there are embers burning under our feet anywhere in the world, so long as there is a foreign policeman guarding the gates of our homeland, so long as there is a foreign master over our country, so long as we do not rule our own land, so long shall we be in your way. You will look around you and fear day and night.3

It should be understood that the concept of primary vis-à-vis secondary motives is not exclusively an attribute of religious extremism but also exists among secular extremist groups. For example, Marxism has been applied in different ways, depending on the political environment of each extremist movement. Ideological groups such as Italy’s Red Brigade were motivated primarily by Marxist ideals during the 1970s and 1980s, but nationalist movements such as Vietnam’s Viet Cong were motivated secondarily by ideology during the 1960s and 1970s—the Viet Cong’s primary motivation was its national identity.

**Understanding Jihad as a Primary Religious Motive: An Observation and Caveat**

Keeping the idiosyncratic quality of religious terrorism in mind, it is arguably necessary to make a sensitive observation—and caveat—about the study of religious terrorism in the modern era. The observation is that in the modern era, the incidence of religious terrorism is disproportionately committed by radical Islamists:

Popular Western perception equates radical Islam with terrorism. . . . There is, of course, no Muslim or Arab monopoly in the field of religious fanaticism; it exists and leads to acts of violence in the United States, India, Israel, and many other countries. But the frequency of Muslim- and Arab-inspired terrorism is still striking. . . . A discussion of religion-inspired terrorism cannot possibly confine itself to radical Islam, but it has to take into account the Muslim countries’ preeminent position in this field.4

---


The caveat is that there is much misunderstanding in the West about the historical and cultural origins of the growth of radical interpretations of Islam. One such misunderstanding is the common belief that the concept of “holy war” is an underlying principle of the Islamic faith. Another misunderstanding is that Muslims are united in supporting jihad. This is simplistic and fundamentally incorrect. Although the term jihad is widely presumed in the West to refer exclusively to waging war against nonbelievers, an Islamic jihad is not the equivalent of a Christian Crusade (the Crusades are discussed later in this chapter). In this regard,

most Muslims, even most fundamentalists, are not terrorists. Instead, they have overwhelmingly been the victims of violent conflicts. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were killed in the war between Iran and Iraq, and the civil wars in Afghanistan and Algeria led to similarly horrific numbers of casualties. Noncombatant Muslims have suffered untold losses in the war between Chechnya and Russia, in the turmoil in Indonesia, and throughout much of Africa and the Middle East.5

Chapter Perspective 6.1 provides some clarification of the concept of jihad.

---

**CHAPTER PERSPECTIVE 6.1: Jihad: Struggling in the Way of God**

The concept of jihad is a central tenet in Islam. Contrary to misinterpretations common in the West, the term literally means a sacred “struggle” or “effort” rather than an armed conflict or fanatical holy war.6 Although a jihad can certainly be manifested as a holy war, it more correctly refers to the duty of Muslims to personally strive “in the way of God.”7

This is the primary meaning of the term as used in the Qur’an, which refers to an internal effort to reform bad habits in the Islamic community or within the individual Muslim. The term is also used more specifically to denote a war waged in the service of religion.8

Regarding how one should wage jihad, The greater jihad refers to the struggle each person has within himself or herself to do what is right. Because of human pride, selfishness, and sinfulness, people of faith must constantly wrestle with themselves and strive to do what is right and good. The lesser jihad involves the outward defense of Islam. Muslims should be prepared to defend Islam, including military defense, when the community of faith is under attack.6 (italics added)

Thus, waging an Islamic jihad is not the same as waging a Christian crusade—it has a broader and more intricate meaning. Nevertheless, it is permissible—and even a duty—to wage war to defend the faith against aggressors. Under this type of jihad, warfare is conceptually defensive in nature; in contrast, the Christian Crusades were conceptually offensive in nature. Those who engage in armed jihad are known as mujahideen, or holy warriors. Mujahideen who receive “martyrdom” by being killed in the name of the faith will find that awaiting them in paradise are rivers of milk and honey, and beautiful young women. Those entering paradise are eventually reunited with their families and as martyrs stand in front of God as innocent as a newborn baby.5

The precipitating causes for the modern resurgence of the armed and radical jihad movement are twofold: the revolutionary ideals and ideology of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the practical application of jihad against the Soviet Union’s occupation of Afghanistan.

(Continued)
A Case of Secondary Religious Motive:  
*The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*

Extremist religious and secular ideologies have historically scapegoated undesirable groups. Many conspiracy theories have been invented to denigrate these groups and to implicate them in nefarious plans to destroy an existing order. Some of these conspiracy theories possess quasi-religious elements that in effect classify the scapegoated group as being in opposition to a natural and sacred order.

Among right-wing nationalists and racists, there often exists a convergence between scapegoating and mysticism. Just as it is common for rightists to assert their natural and sacred superiority, it is also normal for them to demonize a scapegoated group, essentially declaring that the entire group is inherently evil. One quasi-religious conspiracy theory is the promulgation of a document titled *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.6

The *Protocols* originated in czarist Russia and were allegedly the true proceedings of a meeting of a mysterious committee of the Jewish faith, during which a plot to rule the world was hatched—in league with the Freemasons. The *Protocols* are a detailed record of this alleged conspiracy for world domination, but they were, in fact, a forgery written by the secret police (*Okhrana*) of Czar Nicholas II around 1895 and later published by a Russian professor named Sergei Nilus. Many anti-Semitic groups have used this document to justify the repression of European Jews, and it was an ideological foundation for the outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Europe, including massacres and pogroms (violent anti-Jewish campaigns in Eastern Europe).

The National Socialist (Nazi) movement and Adolf Hitler used the *Protocols* extensively. Modern Eurocentric neo-Nazis, Middle Eastern extremists (both secular and religious), and Christian extremists continue to publish and circulate the *Protocols* as anti-Semitic propaganda. In this regard, neo-Nazis and Middle Eastern extremists have found common cause in quasi-religious anti-Semitism. In 1993, a Russian court formally ruled that the *Protocols* are a forgery.7 Nevertheless, the document continues to be referenced by anti-Semitic and other extremists as a historical document.

---

6*The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* has been extensively published on the Internet. It is readily available from websites promoting civil liberties, neo-Nazi propaganda, anti-Semitism, and Islamist extremism.

Historical Cases in Point: Fighting, Dying, and Killing in the Name of the Faith

Terrorism carried out in the name of the faith has long been a feature of human affairs. The histories of people, civilizations, nations, and empires are replete with examples of extremist “true believers” who engage in violence to promote their particular belief system. Some religious terrorists are inspired by defensive motives, others seek to ensure the predominance of their faith, and others are motivated by an aggressive amalgam of these tendencies.

Why do some movements and ethnonational groups link their cause to an underlying spiritual principle? Is it accurate to characterize all spiritually rooted violence as terrorist or extremist? What kinds of historical cases illustrate the idiosyncratic qualities of religious violence? To begin, we may observe that faith-based violence exhibits the same qualities as other terrorist environments. Religious terrorism can be communal, genocidal, nihilistic, or revolutionary. It can be committed by lone wolves, clandestine cells, large dissident movements, or governments. And, depending on one’s perspective, there is often debate about whether the perpetrators should be classified as terrorists or religious freedom fighters.

The following cases are historical examples of the idiosyncratic qualities of religious violence. This is a selective survey (by no means exhaustive) that will demonstrate how some examples of faith-based violence are clearly examples of terrorism, how others are not so clear, and how each example must be considered within its historical and cultural context.

Judeo-Christian Antiquity

Within the Judeo-Christian belief system, there are references in the Bible not only to assassinations and conquest but also to the complete annihilation of enemy nations in the name of the faith. One such campaign is described in the Book of Joshua.

The story of Joshua’s conquest of Canaan is the story of the culmination of the ancient Hebrews’ return to Canaan. To Joshua and his followers, this was the “Promised Land” of the covenant between God and the chosen people. According to the Bible, the Canaanite cities were destroyed and the Canaanites themselves were attacked until “there was no one left who breathed.”8 Assuming that Joshua and his army put to the sword all the inhabitants of the 31 cities mentioned in the Bible, and assuming that each city averaged 10,000 people, his conquest cost 310,000 lives.9

Within the context of this account, to the ancient Hebrews the Promised Land had been occupied by enemy trespassers. To fulfill God’s covenant, it was rational and necessary from their perspective to drive them from the land, exterminating them when deemed necessary.

Christian Crusades

During the Middle Ages, the Western Christian (i.e., Roman Catholic) Church launched at least nine invasions of the Islamic east, the first one in 1095. These invasions were termed Crusades because they were conducted in the name of the Cross. The purpose of the Crusades was to recapture the holy lands from the disunited Muslims, whom they referred to collectively as Saracens.

Christian knights and soldiers answered the call for many reasons. The promises of land, booty, and glory were certainly central secular reasons. Another important reason was the idealistic spiritual promise, made by Pope Urban II, that fighting and dying in the name of the Cross would ensure martyrdom and thereby guarantee a place in heaven. Liberation of the holy lands would bring eternal salvation. Thus, “knights who with pious intent took the Cross would earn a remission from temporal penalties for all his sins; if he died in battle he would earn remission of his sins.” This religious ideology was reflected in the war cry of the early Crusades: Deus vult! ("God wills it!).

During the First Crusade, Western knights—primarily Frankish soldiers—captured a broad swath of biblical lands, including Jerusalem and Bethlehem. When cities and towns were captured, most of the Muslim and Jewish inhabitants were killed outright, a practice that was common in medieval warfare. When Jerusalem was captured in July 1099, Frankish knights massacred thousands of Muslim, Jewish, and Orthodox Christian residents. An embellished Crusader letter sent to Pope Urban II in Rome boasted that the blood of the Saracens reached the bridles of the Crusaders’ horses.

Not all Christian Crusades were fought in Muslim lands. The Western Church also purged its territories of Jews and divergent religious beliefs that were denounced as heresies. The zealfulness and violence of these purges became legendary. During the brutal Albigensian Crusade in southern France during the 13th century, the story was told that concerns were raised about loyal and innocent Catholics who were being killed along with targeted members of the enemy Cathar sect. The pope’s representative, Arnaud Amaury, allegedly replied, “Kill them all, God will know his own.”

The Church-sanctioned invasions and atrocities were deemed to be in accordance with God’s wishes and therefore perfectly acceptable. An extreme and unquestioning faith in the cause led to a series of campaigns of terror against the non-Christian (and sometimes the Orthodox Christian) residents of conquered cities and territories. In a typical and tragic irony of the time, the Greek Orthodox city of Constantinople, center of the Byzantine Empire and one of the great cities of the world, was captured and sacked by Western Crusaders in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade. The Crusaders looted the city and created a short-lived Latin Empire, which lasted until 1261.

The Assassins

The Order of Assassins (sometimes referred to as the Brotherhood of Assassins) was founded by Hasan ibn al-Sabbah in 11th-century Persia. Al-Sabbah was a caliph (religious head) of the Ismaili sect of Islam. He espoused a radical version of Ismaili Islam and founded the Order of Assassins to defend this interpretation of the faith. Beginning in 1090, he and his followers seized a string of fortresses in the mountains of northern Persia, the first of which was the strong fortress of Alamut near Qazvin. Because of these origins, al-Sabbah was called “The Old Man of the Mountain.”

The word assassin was allegedly derived from the drug hashish, which popular opinion has long suggested al-Sabbah’s followers ate prior to committing acts of violence in the name of the faith. They referred to themselves as basbashins or bashisbis, reputedly meaning “hashish eaters,” although this is widely considered by historians to be an apocryphal attribution. During the early years of the movement, Assassin followers spread out of the mountains to the cities of Persia, modern Iraq, Syria, and the Christian Crusader-occupied areas of Palestine. The Assassins killed
many people, including fellow Muslims who were Sunnis, and Christians. Suicide missions were common, and some Crusader leaders went so far as to pay tribute to the Assassins so that the Assassins would leave them alone.

The Assassins were very adept at disguise, stealth, and surprise killings, and thus the word assassination was coined to describe this tactic. A key component of the Assassins' beliefs was the absolute righteousness of their cause and methodology. To kill or be killed was a good thing because it was done in the name of the faith and ensured a place in paradise after death. This belief in complete justification and ultimate reward is practiced by many modern-day religious terrorists.

Although their political impact was negligible and the Assassin organization was eliminated in 1256, they left a profound psychological mark on their era and, in many ways, on the modern era.

A Secret Cult of Murder

In India during the 13th through the 19th centuries, the Thuggee cult existed among some worshippers of the Hindu goddess Kali, the destroyer. They were called by various names, including Phansigars (“noose operators”) and Dacoits (“members of a gang of robbers”). Thuggee comes from ibag, Hindi for thief, from which the English word thug is derived.

Thuggees were a fraternal band of robbers whose behavior they believed glorified Kali. They raised their sons (and often kidnapped children) to become members of the cult, thus passing the tradition to the next generation. Members would strangle sacrificial victims—usually travelers—with a noose called a phansi in the name of Kali and then rob and ritually mutilate and bury them. Offerings would be made to Kali.

The British eventually destroyed the movement during the 19th century, although the death toll of Thuggee victims was staggering: “This secretive cult is believed to have murdered 20,000 victims a year . . . perhaps dispatching as many as several million victims altogether before it was broken up by British officials.”14 There are few debatable counterpoints about this cult—the Thuggees waged a campaign of religious and criminal terror for centuries.

Modern Arab Nationalism and the Rise of Islamist Extremism

The Arab world passed through several important political phases during the 20th century. Overlordship by the Ottoman Empire ended in 1918 after World War I. This was followed by European domination, which ended in the years after World War II. New Arab and North African states were initially ruled primarily by monarchs or civilians who were always authoritarian and frequently despotic. A series of military coups and other political upheavals led to the modern era of governance. These phases had a significant influence on activism among Arab nationalists and intellectuals, culminating in the late 1940s when the chief symbol of Western encroachment became the state of Israel. Postwar activism in the Arab Muslim world likewise progressed through several intellectual phases, most of them secular expressions of nationalism and socialism. The secular phases included the following:

- Anticolonial nationalism, during which Arab nationalists resisted the presence of European administrators and armed forces
- Pan-Arab nationalism (Nasserism), led by Egyptian President Gamel Abdel-Nasser, which advocated the creation of a single dynamic United Arab Republic
- Secular leftist radicalism, which was adopted by many activists to promote Marxist or other socialist principles of governance, sometimes in opposition to their own governments

Many activists and intellectuals became disenchanted with these movements when they failed to deliver political reforms, economic prosperity, and the desired degree of respect from the international community. In particular, several humiliating military defeats at the hands of the Israelis—and the seemingly intractable plight of the Palestinians—diminished the esteem and deference once enjoyed by the secular movements. Arab nationalists—both secular and sectarian—had struggled since the end of World War II to resist what they perceived to be Western domination and exploitation, and some tradition-oriented nationalists began to interpret Western culture and values to be alien to Muslim morality and values.

As a result, new movements promoting Islamist extremism began to overshadow the ideologies of the previous generation. This has placed many Islamists at odds with existing Arab governments, many of which are administered under the principles of the older ideologies.

In the post–Cold War political environment, the adoption of Islam as a vehicle for liberation is a logical progression. When radical secular ideologies and movements achieved minimal progress in resisting the West and Israel, and when secular Arab governments aggressively repressed any expressions of domestic dissent, many activists and intellectuals turned to radical interpretations of Islam. This should not be surprising, because

the discrediting of leftist ideologies within the Muslim world, like the earlier loss of respect for Nasserite pan-Arabism . . . has . . . meant that political Islam has become the main vehicle there for expression . . . of strongly held dissent. A young man in a Muslim country who wants to make a forceful statement against the existing order has few avenues for doing so except through membership in a radical Islamic group.15

There is a sense of collegiality and comradeship among many Islamists, but there are also differences within the ideologies of many leaders, as well as between the Sunni and Shi'a traditions. However, the Islamist movement has transcended most ethnic and cultural differences and is a global phenomenon.

Cult Case: Mysticism and Rebellion in Uganda16

**Phase 1: The Holy Spirit Mobile Force**

Uganda in 1987 was a hotbed of rebellion, with several rebel groups opposing the new government of President Yoweri Museveni. One rebel group was the Holy Spirit Mobile Force, inspired and led by the mystic Alice Lakwena. Lakwena claimed to be inspired by the Christian Holy Spirit and preached that her movement would defeat Museveni's forces and purge Uganda of witchcraft and superstition. Because her followers championed the Acholi tribe (which she declared to be God's chosen people), the Holy Spirit Mobile Force attracted some 10,000 followers, many of them former soldiers from previous Ugandan government armies. In late 1987, she led thousands of her followers against Museveni's army. To protect themselves from death, Holy Spirit Mobile Force fighters anointed themselves with holy shea nut butter oil, which they believed would turn the enemy's bullets into water. She also told her followers that the stones they threw at the enemy would become hand grenades. When they met Museveni's forces, thousands of Lakwena's followers were slaughtered in the face of automatic weapons and artillery fire. Alice Lakwena fled the country to Kenya, where she lived until her death in January 2007.

**Phase 2: The Lord's Resistance Army**

Josef Kony reorganized the Holy Spirit Mobile Force into the Lord's Resistance Army. Kony blended together Christianity, Islam, and witchcraft into a bizarre, mystical foundation for his

---


movement. Kony proclaimed to his followers that he would overthrow the government, purify the Acholi people, and seize power and reign in accordance with the principles of the biblical Ten Commandments.

From its inception, the Lord’s Resistance Army was exceptionally brutal and waged near-genocidal terrorist campaigns—largely against the Acholi people whom it claimed to champion. The movement destroyed villages and towns, killed thousands of people, drove hundreds of thousands more from the land, abducted thousands of children, and routinely committed acts of mass rape and banditry. With bases in southern Sudan, the Lord’s Resistance Army proved to be extremely difficult for the Ugandan government to defeat in the field.

An estimated 30,000 children became kidnap victims, and 1.6 million Ugandans were displaced into refugee camps. These camps became regular targets of the Lord’s Resistance Army, which raided them for supplies, to terrorize the refugees, and to kidnap children. Among the kidnapped children, boys were forced to become soldiers and girls became sex slaves known as bush wives. There has been some hope of ending the conflict. In 2005, a top Lord’s Resistance Army commander surrendered, the government claimed a temporary cease-fire, and Sudan began to stabilize its border with Uganda after its own southern civil war ended. Unfortunately, the Lord’s Resistance Army continued its pattern of violence and abductions, and from 2008 through 2011 the group conducted destructive raids into the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. The resilience of the Lord’s Resistance Army was unmistakable, as it repeatedly survived a series of operations designed to neutralize its effectiveness.

As in the case of the Thuggees, the Lord’s Resistance Army is unquestionably an example of a cultic movement that waged a campaign of religious terrorism.

State-Sponsored Religious Terrorism in the Modern Era

State terrorism is the most organized, and potentially the most far-reaching, application of terrorist violence. Governments possess an array of resources that are unavailable to substate dissident groups, which means that the state is unmatched in its ability to commit acts of violence. Government sponsorship of terrorism is not limited to providing support for ideological or ethnonational movements. It also incorporates state sponsorship of religious revolutionary movements.

National Case: Iran

Iran became a preeminent state sponsor of religious terrorism after the overthrow of the monarchy of Shah Muhammed Reza Pahlavi in 1979 and the creation of the theocratic Islamic Republic of Iran soon thereafter.

Iran has been implicated in the sponsorship of a number of groups that are known to have engaged in terrorist violence, making it a perennial entry on the U.S. Department of State’s list of state sponsors of terrorism. The 125,000-member Revolutionary Guards Corps has a unit—the Qods (Jerusalem) Force—that promotes Islamic revolution abroad and the “liberation” of Jerusalem from non-Muslims. Members of the Revolutionary Guards have appeared in Lebanon and Sudan, and the United States designated the entire corps a terrorist group in August 2007. Significantly, Iranian officials have repeatedly announced the formation of Iranian “martyrdom” units that are prepared to engage in suicide attacks against American and Israeli targets.

---


Case in Point: Iranian Support for Lebanon’s Hezbollah

An important example of Iranian support for politically sympathetic groups is the patronage and assistance given by Iran to Lebanon’s Hezbollah movement. The Iran–Hezbollah relationship is important because of the central role Hezbollah has played in the region’s political environment.

Lebanon’s Shi’a, who comprise roughly half of Lebanon’s Muslims, have been a historically poorer and less politically influential population among Lebanon’s religious groups. The Sunnis, Maronite Christians, and Druze typically wielded more authority. Hezbollah (“Party of God”) is a Shi’a movement in Lebanon that arose to champion the country’s Shi’a population. The organization emerged during the Lebanese civil war and Israel’s 1982 invasion as a strongly symbolic champion for Lebanese independence and justice for the Shi’a population. Hezbollah was responsible for hundreds of incidents of political violence during the 1980s and 1990s. These incidents included kidnappings of Westerners in Beirut, suicide bombings, attacks against Israeli interests in South Lebanon, and attacks against Israel proper. They operated under various names, such as Islamic Jihad and Revolutionary Justice Organization. Hezbollah is a good case study for a number of issues, including the following:

- Proxies for state-sponsored terrorism
- Practitioners of religious dissident terrorism
- Participation in international terrorism
- Application of asymmetrical methods such as high-profile kidnappings and suicide bombings

Although it has proven to be an effective guerrilla and terrorist force, it is also a very diversified social activist organization. For example,

Hezbollah provides social services to its followers, such as schools and medical services. It has engaged in a variety of business ventures, including supermarkets, bakeries, building, farming, bookshops, and clothing sales to true believers, partly to finance its terrorist activities.20

For some time, Hezbollah has been closely linked to Iran. Hezbollah’s leaders, while sometimes guarded about their identification with Iran, have overtly stated that they support the ideals of the Iranian Revolution. Their ultimate goal is to create an Islamic republic in Lebanon, and they consider Israel to be an enemy of all Muslims. Hezbollah tends to consider Iran a “big brother” for its movement. As one leader stated, “Our relationship with the Islamic revolution [in Iran] is one of a junior to a senior . . . of a soldier to his commander.”21 Thus, at their root, the ideological bonds between the movement and the Iranian Revolution are strong.

These bonds allowed Iran’s support to extend beyond ideological identification toward overt sponsorship. Beginning in the 1980s, Iran deployed members of its Revolutionary Guards Corps into Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley—then under Syrian occupation—to organize Hezbollah into an effective fighting force. Iran provided training, funding, and other logistical support. This was done with the acquiescence of Syria, so that Hezbollah is also a pro-Syrian movement.

Case in Point: Iranian Support for Palestinian Islamists

Iran has also promoted religion-motivated movements that are directly confronting the Israelis in Gaza, the West Bank, and inside Israel’s borders. Since the early days of the Iranian Revolution, the Iranian regime has never been guarded about its goal to “liberate” Jerusalem. To achieve this goal, Iran has likewise never been guarded about its overt support for Palestinian organizations that

---

reject dialogue and negotiations with the Israelis. It has, in fact, provided significant assistance to the Palestinian cause by promoting the operations of religious movements. For example, two militant Islamic organizations—Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)—are Palestinian extremist groups that received important support from Iran. Both groups perpetrated many acts of terrorism, including suicide attacks, bombings, shootings, and other violent assaults.

PIJ is not a single organization; rather, it is a loose affiliation of factions. It is an Islamic revolutionary movement that advocates violent jihad to form a Palestinian state. Iranian support to PIJ includes military instruction and logistical support. PIJ members have appeared in Hezbollah camps in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley and in Iran, and planning for terrorist attacks has apparently taken place in these locations. Members who received this training were infiltrated back into Gaza and the West Bank to wage jihad against Israel.

Hamas’s roots lie in the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It operates as both a social service organization and an armed resistance group that promotes jihad. Because of its social service component, Iran’s Fund for the Martyrs has disbursed millions of dollars to Hamas. Hamas posted a representative to Iran who held a number of meetings with top Iranian officials. Iran has also provided Hamas with the same type of support that it provides PIJ; this includes military instruction, logistical support, training in Hezbollah’s Bekaa Valley camps (prior to the Syrian withdrawal), and training in Iran. Hamas operatives returned from these facilities to Gaza and the West Bank.

Regional Case: Pakistan and India

India and Pakistan are seemingly implacable rivals. Much of this rivalry is grounded in religious animosity between the Hindu and Muslim communities of the subcontinent, and the sponsorship of terrorist proxies has kept the region in a state of nearly constant tension.

Hindus and Muslims in Southwest Asia have engaged in sectarian violence since 1947, when British colonial rule ended. The spiritual and political architect of the movement against British rule was Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi, who led an independence movement based on nonviolence and principles of inclusive community. Unfortunately, Gandhi’s deep spiritual convictions could not forestall sectarian confrontation in the new nation. During and after the British withdrawal, communal fighting and terrorism between Hindus and Muslims led to the partition of British India into mostly Muslim East Pakistan and West Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and mostly Hindu India. During the partition, Hindus and Muslims migrated across the new borders by the hundreds of thousands. Since independence, conflict has been ongoing between Pakistan and India over many issues, including Indian support for Bangladesh’s war of independence from Pakistan, disputed borders, support for religious nationalist terrorist organizations, the development of nuclear arsenals, and the disputed northern region of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan, through its intelligence agency, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has a long history of supporting insurgent groups fighting against Indian interests. Religious terrorist groups in the Indian state of Punjab and in Jammu and Kashmir have received Pakistani aid in what has become a high-stakes conflict between two nuclear powers that can also field large conventional armies. The Pakistan–India conflict is arguably as volatile as the Arab–Israeli rivalry, but with many times the manpower and firepower. This is especially noteworthy because both countries possess nuclear arsenals.

Case in Point: The War in Jammu and Kashmir

In the Jammu and Kashmir region, which is occupied by Pakistan, India, and China, a sustained insurgency supported by the ISI led to human rights violations and a campaign of terrorism. The fighting was between Pakistani proxies and Muslim Kashmiris on one side and the Indian army on the other side. About 70% of Jammu and Kashmir’s population is Muslim; the rest are Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists.
Islamic fighters from a number of groups supported by Pakistan have waged a protracted war against the Indian presence, using terrorism to attack Indian forces and interests. Their goal is independence for Jammu and Kashmir. Pro-Pakistan Muslim fighters have included an international assortment of mujahideen from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Arab countries. Groups involved in the insurgency and terrorist campaign have included the following:

- **Harkat-ul-Ansar**, which kidnapped six Western hostages in 1995
- **Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front**, another Pakistani proxy supported by the ISI
- **Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front**, a long-standing independence movement
- **Lashkar e Taiba**, a large Pakistani proxy based in Pakistan

**Case in Point: The Golden Temple Massacre (and Aftermath)**

Sikhism is a religion that was founded about 500 years ago. One of its fundamental beliefs is that only a single all-powerful God should be worshipped, although its followers accept the existence of lesser gods. With approximately 20 million followers, Sikhism is centered in the Indian state of Punjab. The most sacred temple of the Sikh religion is the **Golden Temple** in the city of Amritsar, Punjab.

Punjab is rife with discord, originating in Sikh nationalism, the policies of the Indian army, Punjabi interests, and Pakistani agitation. With training and support from Pakistan's ISI, Sikh nationalists have agitated since at least the 1970s for the creation of the Sikh state of Khalistan in Punjab. In May 1984, armed Sikh militants—among them leaders of a terrorist campaign—occupied the Golden Temple. After negotiations failed, the Indian government of Indira Gandhi (no relation to Mahatma Gandhi) sanctioned an assault. When Indian troops stormed the temple in early June 1984, they were met by greater firepower than they anticipated. Tanks and artillery were called in, and hundreds were killed or wounded before the temple was retaken.

The assault on the Golden Temple inflamed tensions in Punjab, leading to communal violence and terrorism between Sikhs and Punjabis. Nationalists declared independence for Khalistan in 1987, but 500,000 Indian troops violently occupied the Punjab, causing an estimated 250,000 Sikh deaths between 1984 and 1992. Significantly, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated in October 1984 by Sikh bodyguards in revenge for the Golden Temple attack. Included among the many Sikh terrorist groups are Dal Khalsa, Bhinderanwala Tiger Force, Saheed Khalsa Force, the Khalistan Liberation Front, and the Khalistan Commando Force.

Chapter Perspective 6.2 discusses the 2008 assault on Mumbai, India, by highly trained members of Lashkar e Taiba.

**CHAPTER PERSPECTIVE 6.2: Assault on Mumbai**

Mumbai (formerly Bombay) is India’s largest city, the country’s financial hub, and home to the famous and lucrative “Bollywood” Hindi-language film industry. Its reputation is one of prosperous cosmopolitanism, and Western tourists are drawn to reputable hotels, an active nightlife, and rich cultural history. Unfortunately, in recent years, the port city has experienced a series of lethal terrorist attacks. These incidents include the detonation of two car bombs in August 2003 that killed approximately 50 people and seven bombs aboard passenger trains that killed more than 200 in July 2006.

On November 26 through 29, 2008, Mumbai was attacked by 10 determined terrorists who entered the city from the sea aboard dinghies. The attackers spread out to assault high-profile targets throughout Mumbai’s urban center, firing at victims randomly and throwing explosives. Tourist sites, hotels, and a Jewish center were specifically selected for their symbolic value and to inflict maximum casualties. The ferocity of the assault is reflected in the following events:
More than 50 people were killed at the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower hotel. During the initial assault on the night and early morning of November 26 to 27, terrorists seized and killed hostages. A large fire broke out as they fought National Security Guard commandos and police officers when the troops and officers conducted room-to-room searches. Dozens of hostages were rescued during the operation. Firefights continued for days as the terrorists evaded the security sweep, finally ending on the morning of November 29.

More than 30 people were killed at the Oberoi Hotel, which was attacked at the same time and in a similar manner as the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower. Terrorists at the Oberoi seized and killed hostages on November 26 to 27 and began hide-and-seek gun battles with members of the National Security Guard. The Guard restored order during the afternoon of November 28.

Eight people were killed at Nariman House, an ultra-orthodox Jewish Lubavitch-Chabad center. On the night of November 26 to 27, terrorists attacked the center and seized hostages, including the center’s rabbi and his wife. As gunshots were intermittently heard inside Nariman House, commandos assaulted the building on the morning of November 28 and secured the center by nighttime. Although many hostages were freed, others were killed by the terrorists. Victims included the rabbi and his wife.

Members of the terrorist unit struck several other targets around the city, including the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (where dozens were killed), the popular Leopold Café (frequented by tourists), and the Cama and GT Hospitals.

Indian security forces were caught off guard by the scope and violence of the assault. By the time order was restored, more than 160 people were killed and hundreds more injured. Nine terrorists and approximately 20 police officers and soldiers were killed. The lone survivor among the terrorists signed a seven-page confession approximately 2 weeks after the attack in which he confirmed that the men were members of Lashkar e Taiba (Army of the Pure), a Pakistan-based Islamist organization. He described his weapons training at several Lashkar camps in Pakistan and his indoctrination on alleged Indian atrocities against Muslims. Training in Karachi, Pakistan, included how to operate fast boats. When he and nine others embarked on a ship in late November, each man was issued an AK-47 assault rifle, hand grenades, and ammunition. They were ordered to maximize casualties on their mission.

The involvement of Lashkar e Taiba resulted in an escalation in tensions between India and Pakistan. Distrust was exacerbated because of Lashkar’s long affiliation with Pakistan’s Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). This affiliation was instrumental in the group’s rise to prominence and viability within the Islamist movement, largely because ISI allowed the group to engage in recruitment, training, logistical support, and networking. In fact, ISI patronage allowed the group to operate rather openly in Pakistan. Lashkar’s initial role as a Pakistani proxy against India in Kashmir eventually grew into a sizeable movement with wealthy patrons from Saudi Arabia and other countries. Their sophisticated use of the Internet permitted the group to communicate with fellow Islamists in Asia and the Middle East, thus enhancing its international image and contacts. Significantly, Lashkar operatives fought in Iraq against the American-led occupation.

Dissident Religious Terrorism in the Modern Era

Dissident religious terrorism is political violence conducted by groups of religious “true believers” who fervently have faith in the sacred righteousness of their cause. Any behavior carried out in the defense of this sacred cause is considered to be not only justifiable but blessed. Most major religions—in particular,
Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism—possess extremist adherents, some of whom have engaged in terrorist violence. Smaller religions and cults have similar adherents. Among the ubiquitous principles found among religious extremists are their convictions that they are defending their faith from attack by nonbelievers, or that their faith is an indisputable and universal guiding principle that must be advanced for the salvation of the faithful. These principles are manifested in various ways and to varying degrees by religious extremists, but they are usually at the core of their belief system.

Regional Case: Religious Zealotry in the Middle East

From the perspective of religious radicals in the Middle East, violence done in the name of God is perfectly rational behavior because God is on their side. Many of the holy sites in the region are sacred to more than one faith, as in the case of Jerusalem, where a convergence of claims exists among Muslims, Jews, and Christians. When these convergences occur, some extremists believe that the claims of other faiths are inherently blasphemous. Because of this sort of indisputable “truth,” some extremists believe that God wishes for nonbelievers to be driven from sacred sites or otherwise barred from legitimizing their claims. As Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the assassinated founder of the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, explained in a 1998 justification of defensive religious violence,

First of all... these are not suicide operations. [Islam forbids suicide.] We are protecting ourselves. ... The Jews attack and kill our civilians—we will kill their civilians, too. ... From the first drop of blood [the bomber] spills on the ground, he goes to Paradise. The Jewish victims immediately go to Hell.\(^{22}\)

A great deal of violence has been motivated by such sentiments, as illustrated by the following cases in point.

Case in Point: The Grand Mosque Incident

The framework for Muslim life is based on the Five Pillars of Islam. The Five Pillars are faith, prayer, \(\text{zakat}\) (alms, or charity), fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the \(\text{hajj}\) (pilgrimage) to the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for those who are able. In November 1979 during their \(\text{hajj}\), 300 radicals occupied the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Their objective was to foment a popular Islamic uprising against the ruling Saud royal family. After nearly 2 weeks of fighting, the Grand Mosque was reoccupied by the Saudi army, but not before the Saudis called in French counterterrorist commandos to complete the operation. More than 100 radicals were killed, and scores were later executed by the Saudi government. During the fighting, Iranian radio accused the United States and Israel of plotting the takeover, and a Pakistani mob attacked the U.S. embassy, killing two Americans.

Case in Point: The Hebron Mosque Massacre

On February 25, 1994, a New York–born physician, Baruch Goldstein, fired on worshippers inside the Ibrahim Mosque at the Cave of the Patriarchs holy site in the city of Hebron, Israel. As worshippers performed their morning prayer ritual, Goldstein methodically shot them with an Israel Defense Forces Galil assault rifle. He fired approximately 108 rounds in about 10 minutes before a crowd of worshippers rushed and killed him. According to official government estimates, he killed 29 people and wounded another 125;\(^{23}\) according to unofficial estimates, approximately 50 people


died. In reprisal for the Hebron massacre, the Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist movement Hamas launched a bombing campaign that included the first wave of human suicide bombers.

**Case in Point: The Rabin Assassination**

On November 4, 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by **Yigal Amir**, who considered Rabin to be a traitor and had stalked him for about a year. He shot Rabin in the back with hollow-point bullets in full view of Israeli security officers. Amir was a Jewish extremist who said that he acted fully within the requirements of *Halacha*, or the Jewish code. The following account describes the religious justification Amir used for the assassination:

Asked where he got his ideas, Yigal Amir told the magistrate that he drew on the Halacha, which is the Jewish legal code. "According to the Halacha, you can kill the enemy," Amir said. "My whole life, I learned Halacha. When you kill in war, it is an act that is allowed." When asked whether he acted alone, Amir replied: "It was God."  

The foregoing cases in point confirm that religious terrorism in the Middle East occurs between and within local religious groups. Radical true believers of many faiths not only attack those who are of other religions but also readily attack “fallen” members of their own religion. These attacks against proclaimed apostasies can be quite violent.

**Movement Case: The International Mujahideen (Holy Warriors for the Faith)**

The *mujahideen* are Islamic fighters who have sworn a vow to take up arms to defend the faith. They tend to be believers in fundamentalist interpretations of Islam who have defined their *jihad*, or personal struggle, to be one of fighting and dying on behalf of the faith.

The modern conceptualization of the *mujahideen* began during the Soviet war in Afghanistan, which dated from the time of the Soviets’ invasion of the country in December 1979 to their withdrawal in February 1989. Although several Afghan rebel groups (mostly ethnically based) fought the Soviets, they collectively referred to themselves as *mujahideen*. To them, their war of resistance was a holy *jihad*. Significantly, Muslim volunteers from around the world served alongside the Afghan *mujahideen*. These “*Afghan Arabs*” played an important role in spreading the modern *jihadi* ideology throughout the Muslim world.

Reasons for taking up arms as a *jihadi* vary, depending on one’s personal or national context. Some *mujahideen* recruits answer calls for holy war from religious scholars who might declare, for example, that Islam is being repressed by the West. Others respond to clear and identifiable threats to their people or country, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq, or the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. And others may join as *mujahideen* on behalf of the cause of other Muslims, such as the wars fought by Bosnian Muslims or Algerian rebels. Following the 2011 Arab Spring protests, thousands of Islamist fighters volunteered to wage *jihad* against the Assad regime in Syria and the Shi’a-led government in Iraq. Several thousands of these volunteers were Westerners.

Regardless of the precipitating event, *mujahideen* are characterized by their faith in several basic values. The ideology of the modern *mujahideen* requires selfless sacrifice in defense of the faith.

---


25Ibid., p. 225.


27A *jihadi* is one who wages *jihad*, regardless of whether it is an armed *jihad*. *Mujahideen* are *jihadis* who have taken up arms.
Accepting the title of mujahideen means that one must live, fight, and die in accordance with religious teachings. They believe in the inevitability of victory because the cause is being waged on behalf of the faith and in the name of God; both the faith and God will prevail. During this defense of the faith, trials and ordeals should be endured without complaint because the pain suffered in this world will be rewarded after death in paradise. If one lives a righteous and holy life—for example, by obeying the moral proscriptions of the Qur’an—one can enjoy these proscribed pleasures in the afterlife. Thus, the essence of modern mujahideen ideology is a hybrid and simplistic blend of Islamic fundamentalism. This “Islam” seeks to eradicate all forms of Islam other than its own strict literal interpretation of the Koran. It comes packaged with a set of now well-known political grievances . . . and justifies violence as a means of purging nations of corruption, moral degradation, and spiritual torpor.28

As applied by the mujahideen, the defensive ideology of jihad holds that when one defends the faith against the unfaithful, death is martyrdom, and through death paradise will be achieved. One oath of commitment made by a recruit to the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan read,

I . . . state in the presence of God that I will slaughter infidels my entire life . . . And with the will of God I will do these killings in the supervision and guidance with Harkat ul-Ansar . . . May God give me strength in fulfilling this oath.29

Organization Case: Al-Qa’ida’s Religious Foundation

The modern era’s most prominent Islamic revolutionary organization is Saudi national Osama bin Laden’s cell-based Al-Qa’ida (The Base), which seeks to unite Muslims throughout the world in a holy war. Al-Qa’ida is not a traditional hierarchically revolutionary organization; nor does it call for its followers to do much more than engage in terrorist violence in the name of the faith. Al-Qa’ida is best described as a movement or a loose network of like-minded Islamic revolutionaries. Compared to other movements in the postwar era, it is a different kind of network because Al-Qa’ida

- holds no territory,
- does not champion the aspirations of an ethnonational group,
- has no “top-down” organizational structure,
- has virtually nonexistent state sponsorship,
- promulgates political demands that are vague,
- is completely religious in its worldview.

Experts do not know how many people count themselves as Al-Qa’ida operatives, but estimates range from 35,000 to 50,000. Of these, perhaps 5,000 received training in camps in Sudan and Afghanistan.30 Others are new recruits from around the Muslim world and Europe, and many others are veteran Afghan Arabs who fought in the jihad against the Soviets and later against the

---

post–September 11, 2001, American-led coalition forces in Afghanistan. With a presence in an estimated 50 to 60 countries, it is likely that new recruits will continue to join the Al-Qa’ida cause (or Al-Qa’ida–inspired causes) in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks.

Al-Qa’ida’s religious orientation is a reflection of Osama bin Laden’s sectarian ideological point of view. Bin Laden’s worldview was created by his exposure to Islam-motivated armed resistance. As a boy, he inherited between $20 million and $80 million from his father, with estimates ranging as high as $300 million. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, bin Laden eventually joined with thousands of other non-Afghan Muslims who traveled to Peshawar, Pakistan, to prepare to wage jihad. However, his main contribution to the holy war was to solicit financial and matériel contributions from wealthy Arab sources. He apparently excelled at this. The final leg of his journey toward international Islamic terrorism occurred when he and thousands of other Afghan veterans—the Afghan Arabs—returned to their countries to carry on their struggle in the name of Islam. Beginning in 1986, bin Laden organized a training camp that grew in 1988 into the Al-Qa’ida group. While in his home country of Saudi Arabia, bin Laden “became enraged when King Fahd let American forces, with their rock music and Christian and Jewish troops, wage the Persian Gulf war from Saudi soil in 1991.”

After the Gulf War, bin Laden and a reinvigorated Al-Qa’ida moved to its new home in Sudan for 5 years. It was there that the Al-Qa’ida network began to grow into a self-sustaining financial and training base for promulgating jihad. Bin Laden and his followers configured the Al-Qa’ida network with one underlying purpose: “launching and leading a holy war against the Western infidels he could now see camped out in his homeland, near the holiest shrines in the Muslim world.”

Al-Qa’ida has inspired Islamic fundamentalist revolutionaries and terrorists in a number of countries. It became a significant source of financing and training for thousands of jihadis. The network is essentially a nonstate catalyst for transnational religious radicalism and violence.

When Al-Qa’ida moved to Afghanistan, its reputation as a financial and training center attracted many new recruits and led to the creation of a loose network of cells and “sleepers” in dozens of countries. Significantly, aboveground radical Islamic groups with links to Al-Qa’ida took root in some nations and overtly challenged authority through acts of terrorism. Two of these groups—Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines and Laskar Jihad in Indonesia—are discussed in the following sections.

The Abu Sayyaf Group

The Republic of the Philippines experienced several insurgencies and terrorist campaigns in the postwar era. The country’s first serious left-wing rebellion occurred after World War II. The rebellion, as well as the government’s response to it, was the only case in Southeast Asia of a major communist insurgency that was defeated without foreign military assistance. Later, a nationalistic Muslim rebellion in the southern islands, led by the Moro National Liberation Front, scored a number of military and political successes.

Photo 6.4
Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a central member of Al-Qa’ida. A handout photograph released in March 2006 by a U.S. district court as it was introduced during the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui. According to the Pentagon, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed confessed to his role as the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attacks and 29 other terror plots around the world.

---

Ibid.

The religious demographics of the Philippines are roughly 92% Christian, 5% Muslim, and 3% Buddhist, with Muslims living primarily on islands in the southern rim of the Philippines. The Philippines has also been home to Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim insurgency on the island of Basilan with ideological and other links to Al-Qaeda. Abdurajak Janjalani, who was killed by Filipino police in 1998, founded Abu Sayyaf. Like a few other Filipino Islamic militants, Janjalani fought in the jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviets, where he may have known Osama bin Laden. After the war, he returned to the Philippines to wage jihad to create a Muslim state in the southern Philippines. Al-Qaeda funds were apparently sent to Abu Sayyaf, and radical Muslims from the Middle East arrived to provide military and terrorist training for Filipino Muslims.

In April 2000, Abu Sayyaf kidnapped 20 hostages in a Malaysian resort and received $25 million in ransom for their release. The ransom money was used to buy weapons and boats and to recruit and train new fighters. In May 2001, the group kidnapped 20 more people, including three American hostages. One of the Americans was beheaded, probably in June 2001. After the September 11, 2001, attacks, the Filipino government—with advice from hundreds of American Special Forces troops—launched a vigorous campaign to wipe out Abu Sayyaf. The government campaign was successful, and hundreds of Abu Sayyaf fighters were killed or captured or went home. In June 2002, Filipino Special Forces troops identified the location of the two surviving Americans and one Filipina nurse who was also held hostage. During a firefight, one of the Americans and the Filipina were killed, and the other American was wounded.

Abu Sayyaf has proven to be resilient despite setbacks. The Philippine government blamed the group for an October 2002 bomb near a military base that killed an American serviceman, and in February 2004, the group bombed a ferry in Manila Bay, which killed 132 people.

**Laskar Jihad**

Under the leadership of Ja’afar Umar Thalib, the armed Islamic group called Laskar Jihad (Militia of the Holy War) waged communal holy war in Indonesia. Thousands of fighters joined Laskar Jihad, which was organized in April 2000 to confront Christians in a holy war on Indonesia’s Molucca Islands. The Molucca conflict became a communal confrontation between Christians and Muslims in January 1999. The group was based on the island of Java but arrived in the Moluccas in force to champion indigenous Muslims when the fighting broke out. Terrorism and human rights violations became common on both sides—the conflict cost thousands of lives and forced hundreds of thousands of people from their homes.

Although Thalib denied any linkage between Laskar Jihad and Al-Qaeda, Western intelligence agencies claimed that the Al-Qaeda link existed. Thalib had in fact met Osama bin Laden in 1987 in Pakistan during the jihad against the Soviets. However, Thalib argued that bin Laden’s interpretation of the Islamic struggle was incorrect and that his war against Islamic governments was wrong. Before disbanding in October 2002, Thalib and Laskar Jihad engaged in terrorism and forged ties with Malaysia’s terrorist Mujahideen Group.

**Transnational Case: The Algerian Jihadis**

**Prelude: Civil War in Algeria**

The first multiparty elections in Algeria were scheduled to be held in 1992. When it became apparent that an Islamic movement, the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique de Salut, or FIS), would win the election, the elections were canceled by the government of President Chadli Ben Djedid, a former army colonel. FIS incited violent strikes and demonstrations, and the government responded by declaring a state of emergency, postponing the general elections, and seizing control of FIS offices. An antigovernment campaign of terrorism began, growing into a large-scale insurgency that regularly

---

committed acts of terrorism. Typical of these attacks were indiscriminate bombings in August 1992 at the Algiers airport and in front of the Algiers headquarters of the Surété Nationale; the latter bomb killed 42 people and injured 250.34

By the mid-1990s, several Islamic terrorist movements were waging a campaign of terror in the countryside and in the cities of Algeria. These groups, which included the Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armé) and the Armed Islamic Movement (Mouvement Islamique Armé), used exceptionally violent tactics. Thousands of secular teachers, journalists, doctors, academics, and others were assassinated. Foreigners were also singled out for assassination, including French Christian priests, nuns, and monks. In the countryside, bands of Islamic militants swept through villages and towns, killing, kidnapping, and raping noncombatants of all ages. The government responded with a brutal suppression campaign that included massacres and the use of death squads. The government also armed local civilian paramilitary units, many of which included veterans of the anticolonial war against France. Between 1992 and 1997, approximately 120,000 people were killed.35 In 1999, an amnesty was offered, and about 5,000 militants surrendered.36

**Postscript: Spreading the Jihad**

Many of Algeria’s Islamic militants were veterans of the jihād in Afghanistan. Others had been trained in Al-Qaeda camps. During the Algerian insurgency, many Algerians and other North Africans apparently moved abroad to set up support networks for the struggle. The purpose was to establish arms and financing pipelines to the insurgent groups. Some of these support cells apparently became independent “sleeper” cells committed to waging holy war against the West in their home countries. These cells were informally organized and shared “common participants, communications . . . and shared training experiences in Bin Laden–run camps.”37 One such cell plotted to detonate a bomb at Los Angeles International Airport around the time of the 2000 millennial celebrations. It was foiled when Ahmed Ressem, an Algerian who lived in Montreal, was arrested as he tried to cross the Canadian border into the United States with bomb-making components.38 During captivity in the United States, Ressem exchanged a great deal of information about Al-Qaeda operatives for privileges.39 In one such exchange, he admitted that he had been trained in an Al-Qaeda camp, and in other exchanges, he gave information about his former associations. Ressem was sentenced to 22 years in prison in July 2005.40

The Algerian jihād is an example of a nexus of religious terrorism, transnational solidarity among religious fighters, and the spread of revolutionary religious fervor beyond Algeria to cells in the West.

**Internecine Case: Sectarian Civil War in Iraq**

Iraq is a multicultural nation that incorporates significant numbers of people who have very strong ethnonational, tribal, and religious identities. The demography of Iraq consists of the following subpopulations:41

---

35Whitaker, *The Terrorism Reader.*
37Ibid.

---
Part II

The Terrorists

154

Arab: 75%–80%
Shi’a Muslim: 60%–65%
Sunni Muslim: 32%–37%
Kurdish: 15%–20%
Turkoman, Assyrian, or other: 5%
Christian or other: 3%

In recent history, expressions of nationalism or religious independence were harshly repressed. The regime of Saddam Hussein favored Sunni Muslims, repressed expressions of religious independence by Shi’a Muslims, and fought brutal military campaigns against the Kurds. After the collapse of the Hussein regime in March 2003, previously repressed ethnonational and religious groups began to openly display their cultural heritages.

Tensions that had simmered during the Hussein years led to difficulty in fully integrating all groups into accepting a single national identity. For example, many Arabs who had moved into northern Kurdish regions after native Kurds were forced out became pariahs when Kurds returned to reclaim their homes and land. Some violence was directed against the Arab migrants. More ominously, the Sunni minority—which had dominated the country under Hussein—found itself recast as a political minority when the country began to move toward democracy, after an interim government was established in June 2004. Sunnis expressed their dissatisfaction when large numbers refused to participate in elections to form a Transitional National Assembly in January 2005.

Sectarian tensions between Shi’a and Sunni Iraqis became increasingly violent, beginning during a poor security environment in 2004 and 2005 that pitted U.S.-led occupation forces against Iraqi and foreign insurgents. Acts of religion-inspired violence were directed against members of the Shi’a and Sunni communities. For example, scores of Shi’a were killed in March 2004 by suicide bombers in Baghdad and the holy city of Karbala; the Karbala bombing specifically targeted pilgrims celebrating Ashura, the holiest Shi’a holiday.42 In a series of other incidents, hundreds of bodies were found around Iraq in ditches and fields, along roads, and in rivers.

During one period in April and May 2005, scores of bodies were found floating in the Tigris River. Officials blamed these killings not on the insurgency, per se, but on revenge killings between the two communities. Sunni insurgents assassinated Shi’a leaders, bombed or shot at mosques, attacked Shi’a neighborhoods, disrupted religious festivals, and generally targeted centers of Shi’a authority. For the most part, Shi’a leaders strongly denounced the violence and urged members of their community not to retaliate. However, some Shi’a militias armed themselves as an expression of independence and protection. One such militia was organized by cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, whose father (Muhammed Sa’id al-Sadr) was assassinated by the Hussein regime in 1999. The younger al-Sadr stated that Shi’a should “terrorise your enemies as we cannot remain silent at their violations.”43

Also in Iraq, religious extremists—it is unclear whether they were Sunnis or Shi’a—conducted a series of attacks on “non-Muslim” cultural institutions. These included liquor stores (often owned by Christians) and barber shops that designed Western-style haircuts.44 It is estimated that perhaps 50% of Iraq’s Christian population relocated to neighboring countries (Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon) following the collapse of the Hussein regime in 2003.

---

Case in Point: The Rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

In early 2014 the international community was surprised when a little-known Sunni insurgent movement overrun significant swaths of territory in northern Iraq. The international community was further alerted when these insurgents seized major population centers in Iraq—particularly the cities of Mosul and Tikrit (Saddam Hussein's home city)—as the Iraqi army and other security forces were routed. The movement was the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS.

ISIS (also known as ISIL) was formally declared to exist in April 2013 during the Syrian civil war that began in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring protests, and that subsequently escalated to inter-necine warfare in 2012. The central tenets of ISIS are its refusal to recognize the borders of Syria, Iraq, and other Eastern Mediterranean nations, and its war to achieve the avowed goal of establishing a renewed caliphate (Islamic state) transcending these borders. This doctrine brought the movement into political opposition with Al-Qa’ida’s central leadership, in particular leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who disavowed ISIS when the group refused to limit its operations only to Syria. This disavowal did nothing to diminish ISIS’s operations on the battlefield. In Iraq, ISIS became the de facto successor to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s Al-Qa’ida Organization for Holy War in Iraq (AQI), which had waged an intensive Islamist insurgency from about 2005 to 2006 against U.S.-led occupation forces, the Iraqi army, and the Shi’a Badr Brigade.

ISIS adopted brutal tactics from the beginning of its war. The movement regularly executed captured Iraqi soldiers and police officers, imprisoned and tortured Iraqi civilians, kidnapped and executed Western civilians, and imposed draconian shari’a law and order in the territory it occupied. ISIS routinely recorded and broadcast beheadings, crucifixions, and massacres via social networking.

Table 6.2 Two Traditions, One Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunni Muslims</th>
<th>Shi’a Muslims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historically accept all four caliphs (successors to Muhammed) as being legitimate, including the caliph Ali, Muhammed’s son-in-law and cousin.</td>
<td>Historically reject the first three caliphs before Ali as being illegitimate successors to Muhammed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only the prophet Muhammed and the holy Qur’an are authorities on questions of religion. The Shi’a succession of imams is rejected.</td>
<td>As the first legitimate caliph, Ali was also the first in a historical line of imams, or leaders within Muslim communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historically, leaders within the Islamic world have been political leaders and heads of governments rather than religious leaders.</td>
<td>Imams serve as both political and religious leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no strictly organized clergy. For example, no single religious leader can claim ultimate authority, and nonclergy may lead prayers.</td>
<td>Imams have strict authority, and their pronouncements must be obeyed. Imams are without sin, and appoint their successors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Levant refers to the Eastern Mediterranean region, traditionally encompassing Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Cyprus.
media. As knowledge of ISIS’s tactics spread, thousands of members of the Iraqi army and security forces literally shed their uniforms and abandoned weapons when relatively small numbers of ISIS fighters advanced.

ISIS successfully inspired international fighters to join the movement in Syria and Iraq, many of whom were volunteers from North Africa, Chechnya, Europe, and the United States. A stated goal by ISIS was to have these volunteers return to their home countries to wage *jihad* domestically.

Because ISIS and other similar Sunni movements are often in conflict with Shi’a Muslims, readers should be familiar with the essential distinctions between the Sunni and Shi’a Islamic traditions. Table 6.2 summarizes these differences.46

**National Case: Boko Haram in Nigeria**

The **Boko Haram** organization was founded in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri in northeastern Nigeria. Originally little more than a religious complex with a school and mosque, the organization also espoused a political agenda with the goal of establishing an Islamic state. The Islamic school actively recruited adherents for waging *jihad*, and in 2009 Boko Haram launched sporadic attacks against government installations and personnel in Maiduguri. Since 2009, Boko Haram has attacked military and police targets, schools, Christian churches, and gathering places such as bars. It has been responsible for thousands of casualties, kidnappings, and population displacements, with the weekly death toll sometimes above one hundred victims.

The term **Boko Haram** is loosely translated as “Western Education Is Forbidden,” a reference in part to the legacy of British colonial missionary work and the presence of a significant Christian population in Nigeria. The group also holds that participation in Western social or political activity is forbidden, including participating in elections and wearing Western dress. In April 2014 Boko Haram kidnapped approximately 200 schoolgirls, vowing to hold them as “wives” for its fighters.

**Cult Case: Aum Shinrikyō (Supreme Truth)**

**Aum Shinrikyō** is a Japan-based cult founded in 1984 by **Shoko Asahara**. Its goal under Asahara’s leadership was to seize control of Japan and then the world. The core belief of the cult is that Armageddon—the final battle before the end of the world—is imminent. One component of this doctrine is that the United States will wage World War III against Japan.47 As one top member of the cult explained, “This evil [of the modern age] will be shed in a ‘catastrophic discharge’ . . . [and only those who] repent their evil deeds . . . [will survive].”48

At its peak membership, Aum Shinrikyō had perhaps 9,000 members in Japan and 40,000 members around the world—thousands of them in Russia.49 Asahara claimed to be the reincarnation of Jesus Christ and Buddha and urged his followers to arm themselves if they were to survive Armageddon. This apocalyptic creed led to the stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons, including nerve gas,

---

46For an analysis of the conflict between Sunni and Shi’a Muslims, see Ghosh, Bobby. “Why They Hate Each Other.” *Time*, March 5, 2007.


49U.S. Department of State, “Aum.”
The Tokyo Subway Nerve Gas Attack

On March 20, 1995, members of Aum Shinrikyō positioned several packages containing Sarin nerve gas on five trains in the Tokyo subway system. The trains were scheduled to travel through Tokyo's Kasumigaseki train station. The containers were simultaneously punctured with umbrellas, thus releasing the gas into the subway system. Twelve people were killed and an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 were injured. Tokyo's emergency medical system was unable to respond adequately to the attack, so that only about 500 victims were evacuated, with the remaining victims making their own way to local hospitals. The police were also surprised by the attack, and

it took ... several weeks to narrow their search to the Aum sect, locate its leaders, and seize some of their arsenal, despite the fact that Aum was not a secret organization but one that paraded through the streets of Tokyo—albeit in masks that depicted the face of their guru and leader, Shoko Asahara.

The police seized tons of chemicals stockpiled by the cult. Asahara was arrested and charged with 17 counts of murder and attempted murder, kidnapping, and drug trafficking. A new leader, Fumihiro Joyu, assumed control of Aum Shinrikyō in 2000 and renamed the group Aleph (the first letter in the Hebrew and Arabic alphabets). He has publicly renounced violence, and the cult's membership has enjoyed new growth in membership.

Aum Shinrikyō is an example of the potential terrorist threat from apocalyptic cults and sects that are completely insular and segregated from mainstream society. Some cults are content simply to prepare for the End of Days, but others—like Aum Shinrikyō—are not averse to giving the apocalypse a violent "push."

A Japanese court sentenced cult leader Shoko Asahara to death by hanging on February 27, 2004. Table 6.3 summarizes the activity profiles of several of the terrorist groups and movements discussed in this chapter.

The Future of Religious Terrorism

The new millennium began with a resurgence of religious terrorism. Unlike previous terrorist environments, the new era of terrorism is largely shaped by the international quality of this resurgence—in essence, modern religious terrorism is a global phenomenon affecting every member of the international community. The current ideological profile of this development is one of activism and momentum among radical Islamists. Although extremist members of other faiths will certainly strike periodically, the Islamist tendency continues to attract new cadres of jihadis who oppose secular governments and Western influence in the Middle East. Many new adherents originate from Western countries.

Religion is a central feature of the New Terrorism, and the New Terrorism is characterized by asymmetrical tactics, cell-based networks, indiscriminate attacks against "soft" targets, and the threatened use of high-yield weapons technologies. Al-Qa'ida and its Islamist affiliates pioneered this strategy,
and it serves as a model for new similarly motivated individuals and groups. Religious extremists understand that by adopting these characteristics, their agendas and grievances will receive extensive attention, and their adversaries will be sorely challenged to defeat them. It is therefore reasonable to presume that religious terrorists will practice this strategy for the near future.

Having made this observation, it is important to critically assess the following questions: What trends are likely to challenge the global community in the immediate future? Who will enlist as new cadres in extremist religious movements? Who will articulate the principles of their guiding ideologies? The following patterns, trends, and events are offered for critical consideration:

- **Extremist religious propaganda cannot be prevented.** All religious extremists—Christian, Islamic, Jewish, and others—have discovered the utility of the Internet, the global media, and social networking media. They readily communicate with one another through the Internet, and their websites have become forums for propaganda and information.54 Cable television and other members of

---

the globalized media frequently broadcast interviews and communiqués. Social networking media are readily accessible dissemination outlets for “live” events as they occur in real time.

- **A new generation of Islamist extremists has been primed.** In a prescient study reported in January 2005, the Central Intelligence Agency’s National Intelligence Council concluded that the war in Iraq created a new training and recruitment ground for potential terrorists, replacing Afghanistan in this respect. One official stated, “There is even, under the best scenario . . . the likelihood that some of the jihadists [will go home], and will therefore disperse to various other countries.”\(^5\) This assessment accurately predicted the rise of a new generation of *jihadis*—especially after the Arab Spring in 2011, when international fighters enlisted in newly emergent Islamist movements in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere.

- **Al-Qaeda has become more than an organization; it evolved to become a symbol and ideology.** Osama bin Laden, founder and leader of Al-Qaeda, presented himself in a series of communiqués as an “elder statesman” and intellectual of Islam. He recast himself as a symbolic mentor for the next generation of fighters.\(^5\) After bin Laden’s death in 2011 many *jihadis* considered him a martyr.

- **The *jihadi* movement has become a globalized phenomenon.** The dissemination of information and images via the media, the Internet, and social networking media created a global sense of solidarity among Islamists. Potential recruits easily access information, and many new volunteers are young people who live in the West, often in Europe.\(^5\) The influx of Western volunteers who fought with Islamist movements such as ISIS confirmed the international scope and influence of the *jihadi* movement.

- **Christian extremists continue to promote a religious motivation for the war on terrorism.** Postings on some Christian websites and comments from some Christian leaders, usually in the United States, intimate that the Islamic faith is wrong and/or evil, and the war on terrorism is part of a divine plan pitting the “true faith” against Islam.\(^5\)

---

**Chapter Summary**

Religious movements are motivated by a belief that an otherworldly power sanctions and commands their behavior. Some religious terrorists are motivated primarily by faith, whereas other terrorists use religion secondarily. The latter movements are motivated by nationalism or some other ideology as a primary inspiration, but they are united by an underlying religious identity that is incorporated into their belief system. The goals of both primary and secondary religious terrorism are to construct a new society based on their religious or ethnonational identity. The terrorist behavior of both tendencies is active and public.

State-sponsored religious terrorism emanates from governments that pursue international agendas by mentoring and encouraging religious proxies. The case of Iranian support for religious dissident terrorists is an example of a theocracy that is promoting its own revolutionary agenda. The case of Syria is an example of a secular government that supports religious movements out of a sense of common cause against a mutual enemy. Dissident religious terrorism involves attacks by self-proclaimed “true believers” against members of other faiths and perceived apostasies within their own faith. Some dissident groups espouse mystical

---


\(^5\) Within popular culture, pundits, bloggers, and others dubbed the war on terrorism as a Tenth Crusade.
or cult-like doctrines that are outside the belief systems of major religions.

In Chapter 7, readers will review extremist ideologies and terrorist behavior. The discussion will focus on specific cases in point as well as the contexts for armed ideological dissident movements. Reasons for ideological violence in liberal democracies will also be evaluated.

Key Terms and Concepts

The following topics are discussed in this chapter and can be found in the glossary:

- Abu Sayyaf
- "Afghan Arabs"
- Al-Qa’ida Organization for Holy War in Iraq
- al-Zarqawi, Abu Musab
- Amir, Yigal
- Armed Islamic Group
- Armed Islamic Movement
- Asahara, Shoko
- Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth)
- bin Laden, Osama
- Boko Haram
- caliphate
- Crusades
- Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)
- Fund for the Martyrs
- Golden Temple
- Goldstein, Baruch
- greater jihad
- Harkat-ul-Ansar
- Hezbollah
- Holy Spirit Mobile Force
- Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS)
- Jammu and Kashmir
- Islamic Front
- Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front
- Jewish Defense League
- jihad
- jihadi
- Kahane, Rabbi Meir
- Lashkar e Taiba
- Laskar Jihad (Militia of the Holy War)
- lesser jihad
- Lord’s Resistance Army
- martyrdom
- Okhrana
- Order of Assassins
- phansi
- pogroms
- Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, The
- Qods (Jerusalem) Force
- Ressem, Ahmed
- Revolutionary Guards Corps
- Stern Gang
- Thuggee

Discussion Box: The One True Faith

This chapter’s Discussion Box is intended to stimulate critical debate about faith-motivated terrorism within major religions.

Most religious traditions have produced extremist movements whose members believe that their faith and value system is superior to other beliefs. This concept of the “one true faith” has been used by many fundamentalists to justify violent intolerance on behalf of their religions. Religious terrorists are modern manifestations of historical traditions of extremism within the world’s major faiths. For example,

- Within Christianity, the medieval Crusades were a series of exceptionally violent military campaigns against Muslims, Jews, and heretical Christian sects. Later, during the 16th and 17th centuries, Catholic and Protestant Christians waged relentless wars against each other, which were marked by extreme brutality. In the modern era, Christian terrorists and extremists have participated in communal fighting in numerous countries and, in the United States, have
bombed abortion clinics and committed other acts of violence.

- Within Judaism, the Old Testament is replete with references to the ancient Hebrews' faith-based mandate to wage war against non-Jewish occupiers of the Promised Land. In the modern era, the late Rabbi Meir Kahane's Kach (Kahane Chai) movement in Israel has likewise advocated the expulsion of all Arabs from Israel. Two members of the Jewish Defense League were arrested in the United States in December 2001 on charges of conspiring to bomb Muslim mosques and the offices of a U.S. congressman in Los Angeles.

- Within Islam, the relative religious tolerance of the 15th and 16th centuries is counterbalanced against modern intolerance among movements such as Afghanistan's Taliban, Palestine's Hamas, and Lebanon's Hezbollah. Numerous examples exist of political and communal violence waged in the name of Islam. Overt official repression has also been imposed in the name of the Islamic faith, as in Saudi Arabia's policy of relegating women to second-class status.

Modern religious extremism is arguably rooted in faith-based natural law. Natural law is a philosophical “higher law” that is theoretically discoverable through human reason and references to moral traditions and religious texts. In fact, most religious texts have passages that can be selectively interpreted to encourage extremist intolerance. To religious extremists, it is God's law that has been revealed to—and properly interpreted by—the extremist movement.

**Discussion Questions**

- Is faith-motivated activism a constructive force for change?
- At what point does the character of faith-motivated activism become extremist and terrorist?
- Does faith-based natural law justify acts of violence?
- Why do religious traditions that supposedly promote peace, justice, and rewards for spiritual devotion have so many followers who piously engage in violence, repression, and intolerance?
- What is the future of faith-based terrorism?

**On Your Own**

The open-access Student Study Site at [http://study.sagepub.com/martin5e](http://study.sagepub.com/martin5e) has a variety of useful study aids, including eFlashcards, quizzes, audio resources, and journal articles. The websites, exercises, and recommended readings listed below are easily accessed on this site as well.

**Recommended Websites**

The following websites provide links to discussions of religious terrorism and extremism:

Web Exercise

Using this chapter’s recommended websites, conduct an online investigation of religious extremism.

1. What commonalities can you find among the religious websites? What basic values are similar? In what ways do they differ?

2. Are the religious sites effective propaganda? How would you advise the site designers to appeal to different constituencies?

For an online search of historical and cultural issues pertaining to religious extremism, readers should activate the search engine on their Web browser and enter the following keywords:

“Christian Crusades”  “Jihad”

Recommended Readings

The following publications discuss the motives, goals, and characteristics of religious extremism: