

Osama bin Laden's *Global Jihad:* Myth and Movement

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ASSESSING THE SOUNDNESS of Osama bin Laden's global jihad concept by analyzing the movement and its myth has implications for U.S. information operations and counterinsurgency strategies and demonstrates the importance of cultural understanding. Much has been written already on the topic of global jihad, but my analysis is quite different from those that interpret Bin Laden's endeavors on the basis of Western thought. My analysis takes an inside-out (vice an outside-in) approach that is based on my interpretation of Arab-Islamic thought. Before engaging in this effort, though, we must first define key terms.

Definitions

In American society, the word "myth" is too often taken to mean "fictitious story" or "fable"—something to be discredited in rational and scientific pursuits. Thus, if the global jihad concept is a myth, it can be readily dismissed. This interpretation, however, runs counter to my intent. I use myth in its technical, anthropologic sense: a partly fictional story (or image) with some historic basis that imparts a lesson to society. In this sense, mythmaking is a culturally unique, effective means of influencing behavior, not something to be easily dismissed. With respect to Bin Laden's movement, the behavior sought is resistance to or rebellion against governmental authority, and the main mythic theme is grievance against that authority.

Myth of grievance. Many students of insurgency recognize the importance of the myth of grievance, although they do not all use this term. Some authors prefer "grievance narrative."¹ In one of the more comprehensive works on insurgency, Bard O'Neil addresses the same concept in terms of "esoteric appeal."² The difference in terminology, however, should be no distraction: it merely reflects difference in educational backgrounds, prospective audiences, references, and other influences. Regardless of which term is used, the significant point is that the myth is complex and adaptable and consists of many elements that might change in their use or emphasis over time.

Insurgency movement. Any use of "myth" warrants clarification, and so too does the use of *movement*. One of the basic meanings of the latter word is "an organized effort to attain some end." Expanding that definition, we

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can characterize Bin Laden's movement as militant and its end as political. Thus, we are dealing with insurgency or something akin to it.

In the U.S. Department of Defense's *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, insurgency is defined as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict."³ A resistance movement is defined as "an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability."⁴ There is considerable debate over how to classify Bin Laden's movement, but any movement has methods, strategies, and goals, and we can analyze these.

With key terms defined, we can move on to the substance and method of analysis. Most observers of contemporary jihadism agree that, with the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the movement now has two prominent leaders, Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, and numerous advisers and ideologues who influence them. Observers also agree that the movement is not fully cohesive because the spokesmen's words convey different immediate objectives and emphases. To examine all of these differences and underlying motives and influences would require writing a book, so I am focusing on Bin Laden's concept, pointing out variances where they seem significant.

Articulating Jihad

Where does Bin Laden articulate his global jihad concept? It is not found in any one text, but rather in a series of public statements he has made since the early 1990s. The task of acquiring the text of these statements is more complicated than it might seem. Multiple, slightly different versions of Arabic "originals" exist, all with variant English translations. Nonetheless, editor Bruce Lawrence recently published *Messages to the World*, an English-language collection of 24 of Bin Laden's most significant statements (speeches and interviews) for which the translations are consistent.⁵

Lawrence's work is an excellent source compendium, except that it includes an abbreviated instead of a full version of Bin Laden's famous "Declaration of Jihad."⁶ To have a more complete base for content analysis, I examined the full-text version of Bin Laden's declaration as well as the recent audio message to America presenting the alternatives of "More Operations, Long-Term Truce."

The 25 statements reveal that Bin Laden's myth of grievance is comprised of substantive complaints, relevant principles, and an overarching motive to act. His substantive complaints concern infidel (U.S.) troop presence near the Islamic holy sites of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia; U.S.-backed Israeli aggression in Palestine, including dispossessing native Muslims and pressing claims on the Temple Mount site; and bilateral collusion in undervaluing oil—the wealth of many Islamic countries. Bin Laden repeatedly cites these three issues, couching them in terms of Islamic beliefs.

U.S. troop presence. Bin Laden views the Saudi regime's accommodation of a U.S. troop presence in the kingdom as a grave offense, given the belief that Muhammad desired to rid Arabia of Christians and Jews. Bin Laden quotes hadiths according to which Muhammad said, "There can be no two religions in the Arabian peninsula"; and "I am banishing the Jews and Christians...so that I preach only to Muslims."⁷

Israeli aggression in Palestine. Bin Laden laments various diplomatic concessions to the Israelis. He reminds his audience that the Temple Mount site



An image taken from Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television, 23 June 2006, shows footage of Ayman al-Zawahiri vowing to avenge the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, killed in a U.S. air raid 7 June 2006.

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(al-Harâm al-Sharîf) in Jerusalem is a sacred place for Muslims and that Palestine is Muslim land. He alludes to the former as “the first of the (two) directions of prayer” and the latter as “the land of the Prophet’s night journey” (ascent to heaven).⁸

Undervaluing Oil. Bin Laden questions the morals of regional rulers who, he says, fix the price of oil and make costly arms deals with the “infidel” West. He recalls the Quranic verse: “All of them committed excesses in their lands, and spread corruption there; your Lord let a scourge of punishment loose on them.”⁹

Grievances on Principle

Bin Laden adds impetus to the above complaints by evoking the anti-materialist, anti-elitist, and anti-civic tendencies of Islamic social thought—what I would call “grievances on principle.” He gains his intended effect through the repetition of words and word images that connote the three tendencies. Because they are somewhat less tangible than his substantive grievances, we will discuss these tendencies individually.

Anti-materialism. The theme of anti-materialism is common to many religions and cults and is not essentially a negative concept. Rather, it most highly values spiritual life in the hereafter. An associated belief is that wealth is transitory, but salvation through moral discipline is lasting. Thus, the true believer should be willing to sacrifice his wealth, if not his life, for the sake of salvation. Bin Laden evokes this theme at least 25 times in his major statements, with “A Muslim Bomb” and “Depose the Tyrants” accounting for half that number. His appeal is traditional, in that he draws on the lore of the Quran and hadiths. Interestingly, he does not use the motif of an archetypal contest between spiritualist and materialist doctrines, which was a concern of the early Muslim activist Jamal al-Din al-Afghani.¹⁰

Anti-elitism. This theme is also found in various cultures. However, in its Islamic version, it does not refer to the inherent equality of men or to the social inequities described by anti-aristocratic or anti-oligarchic movements in other societies. The key idea for Muslim dissidents such as Bin Laden is that nobility derives from fulfilling the obligations of Islam. Rulers are to be judged by this standard and, if found lacking, deposed by the people. The

historic precedent is the case of the third Caliph Uthman, whose mutinous troops killed him when he declined to punish their governor for wrongdoing. While the authors of Islamic tradition neither condemn nor applaud regicide, the event led to the murder of the next caliph and caused a permanent division in the Islamic population over the issue of legitimate leadership.

Bin Laden does not mention these historic precedents, but he views contemporary regional rulers as having compromised their positions through various acts of commission and omission. He first cautions, then denounces, them. By contrast, his nobles are (mostly) nameless young men who fulfill the duty of jihad and are called heroes, knights, or lions. Bin Laden makes anti-elitist allusions over 80 times in 12 of his major statements. “Declaration of Jihad” and “Nineteen Students” extol the common young men who fulfill their duty of jihad. “Depose the Tyrants” criticizes Saudi rulers who fail to fulfill their obligations under Islamic law.

Anti-civic. The anti-civic theme is largely unknown in Western civilization. Western political and legal norms are founded on the ideal of representative assemblies of various size framing constitutions and regulations on the basis of reason, natural law, and public interest. This ideal is completely alien to Islamic culture, where the validity of law depends on its conformance with divine revelation. Thus, for Bin Laden, man-made law is invalid, U.S. democracy is hypocrisy, and the United Nations is a tool of the infidels. He evokes such ideas at least 25 times, although the theme does not dominate his major statements.

Overarching Motive to Act

At this point we see that Bin Laden’s myth has three grievances of substance and three grievances on principle, but what is the catalyst, or motive, that makes them incentives for action? It is the theme of “Erasing Shame.” To understand how significant the feeling of shame is to Muslims, we must consider the Arab psyche. The key point is already well presented in the writings of two renowned authorities: Raphael Patai and David Pryce-Jones. Patai highlights the overriding importance of the honor-shame syndrome in his treatment of Bedouin values in Arab behavior.¹¹ Pryce-Jones tells us that honor-shame judgments are harder to ignore than

the obligations of Islam. He writes, “Acquisition of honour, pride, dignity, respect and the converse avoidance of shame, disgrace, and humiliation are keys to Arab motivation, clarifying and illuminating behavior in the past as well as in the present. . . . Honour is what makes life worthwhile; shame is a living death, not to be endured, requiring that it be avenged.”¹² The point is well put, but the intensity of this syndrome cannot be fully understood except through personal interaction with the culture.¹³

In any case, its importance is clearly seen in Bin Laden’s statements. He builds a theme of erasing shame by constantly mentioning situations of enduring humiliation and disgrace and prospects of restoring honor and dignity. He brings up this theme over 75 times in 18 of his major statements, with “Declaration of Jihad” accounting for roughly one-fifth of the relevant remarks.

Bin Laden’s Targets

In his myth of grievance, Bin Laden has developed a complex rationale for striking out at antagonists. He clearly defines three sets of targets: infidel regimes, apostate rulers, and the “Crusader Alliance.”

Infidel regimes. In Bin Laden’s view, the United States, Great Britain, and Israel comprise the core of what he calls the Crusader Alliance against Islam. Bin Laden selectively quotes from the Quran and hadith to justify jihad against these “Christians and Jews.” He ignores passages that enjoin tolerant treatment of the “People of the Book” because, in his view, “modern Anglo-American Christians and Zionist Jews” have violated the conditions that warrant such treatment.

Apostate rulers. Bin Laden’s second set of targets consists of so-called apostate rulers, leaders of Muslim countries who have not only reneged on their obligations to Islamic society but also ignored appeals for reform and have thus become “lawful blood.” He condemns them for allegedly creating injustice and abetting the crusader cause. However, to Bin Laden it is more difficult to justify Muslims killing other Muslims than it is to justify Muslims killing infidels. On this point, Bin Laden frequently appeals to the authority of the 14th-century religious scholar Ibn Taymiyya, who denounced the Mongol rulers of his time, despite their being Muslims. Ibn Taymiyya’s writing justifies for Sunni Islam the

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tenet of takfir (the right of one Muslim person or group to treat another Muslim as an infidel due to supposed violation of Islamic law). Actually, the first recourse to takfir antedated Ibn Taymiyya by many centuries, and that history is well worth recalling, but not before we consider Bin Laden’s third set of targets.

The Crusader Alliance. The so-called Crusader Alliance consists of the societies of the allied Crusader and Zionist states and the henchmen of their collaborators. Bin Laden clearly seeks to ruin America’s economy and undermine its war-making capacity, which means that some noncombatants must become collateral casualties. He justifies the death or injury of employees of embassies, defense contractors, and other targeted sectors by contending that the killing of innocents, even women and children, is allowed in retaliatory self-defense. Bin Laden saw the World Trade Center as a legitimate target because “the ones who were attacked and who died in it were part of a financial power. It wasn’t a children’s school! Neither was it a residence.”¹⁴ Still, circumstances matter: Bin Laden does not advocate the wanton killing of the populace of an enemy state or community. Indeed, he takes noticeable effort to dissociate himself from such practice, which is the hallmark of the Kharijites of old and the takfirists today. In fact, he states that the Riyadh regime “has accused the mujahidin of following the path of the Kharijites, but they know that we have nothing to do with such a school of thought.”¹⁵

The Kharijite Movement

What then is the significance of Bin Laden’s allusions to the Kharijite movement, which has been long relegated to the dustbin of history? The movement created the first sectarian rift within the

Islamic dominion. During the Alid-Umayyad dispute over succession to the caliphate in the fourth decade of the Islamic era (circa 650-660 A.D.), the Kharijites turned against both contending parties on the grounds of anti-elitism. They denounced the conventional notion that the clans of Quraysh (the Prophet's kin group) were an elect group and the concomitant belief that the caliph must be of Qurashi lineage.

The Kharijites developed a new creed, which emphasized the equality of all Muslims and refuted the moral doctrine of justification by faith (versus deeds or good acts). These people held to a militant, puritanical, and fanatically self-righteous stance. They adopted the principle of takfir (excommunication or declaring a person or group of people non-Muslim) and raided and killed in any vulnerable Muslim community that would not accept their beliefs. These renegades were reviled for their incessant uprisings and their slaughter of noncombatants, including women and children.

Because the Kharijite doctrine of takfir appealed to social groups dispossessed of wealth and disaffected with government, the Kharijites found ample converts and allies. The movement spread throughout Iraq and Iran and was particularly tenacious in Arabia and Algeria. Kharijite insurrections afflicted the Islamic dominion during the first 300 years of its existence. However, Kharijism as a political force gradually succumbed to the countermeasures of legitimate regimes. Of the various offshoots of the original movement, the only prominent one to have formally survived is the moderate Ibadi sect found in Oman and Zanzibar. Kharijism seems also to have survived among the Berbers of Algeria in the form of folk religion. True, the movement expired centuries ago; however, the same mindset has survived in other manifestations.

The Wahhabi Movement

Many of the characteristics of Kharijite thought and behavior are reflected in the Wahhabi movement, which arose in eastern Arabia during the mid-18th century. The movement originated as a puritanical reaction to Ottoman Turkish and other foreign influences and combined the theological leadership of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the practical leadership of Muhammad ibn Saud, the eponymous ancestor of the Saudi dynasty.

Technically, the Wahhabis were not Kharijites in that they held different beliefs relative to justification by faith and lawful blood. Yet, Wahhabism had many of the same features as Kharijism. The Wahhabis, led by the House of Saud, accepted the principle of takfir and so conducted jihad against other Muslims. Considered to be puritanical, fanatical, and self-righteous, they accepted a leader (imam), actually a dynast, who was not of Qurashi lineage. They also reserved the right to depose the imam if his motives became suspect. Thus, Wahhabi militiamen revolted against Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd al-Rahman, the restorer of the Saudi dynasty, when he ordered them to cease raiding the British mandates of Iraq and Transjordan. Abd al-Aziz retained sufficient support to defeat the Wahhabis at the battle of Sabala in February 1929 and eventually extinguished the revolt in subsequent campaigns.

In "Depose the Tyrants," Bin Laden recasts the relevant events of 1929 in an attempt to show that the Saudi leader deceived his followers on two counts: sanctioning takfir and bending to the British. Bin Laden takes this tack as part of a serious effort at averting the blame for the deaths of innocent people, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. He disavows any deliberate intent to take innocent Muslim blood. In his appeal, he laments coincidental Muslim deaths and emphatically denies that his followers are Kharijites, a charge he had previously rejected in "Resist the New Rome."

Righteous Retaliation

In "Terror for Terror," Bin Laden considers innocent blood in the context of righteous retaliation. He asserts that both religion and logic justify attacks on non-combatants to avenge like attacks and deter future ones. Even so, he makes the claim that those who struck on 9/11 "did not set out to kill children." He says they were only attacking the military and financial centers of a powerful enemy.

Just as the question of intent is important, so too is the question of innocence. In "Nineteen Students," Bin Laden contends that America instigated the 9/11 attacks. In his later address, "To the Americans," he tells us why he considers the American people in general to be culpable:

- They choose their government, which supports Israel's oppression of the Palestinians.
- They pay the taxes that fund the military

machine that bombs in Afghanistan, destroys homes in Palestine, occupies the Persian Gulf region, and blockades Iraq.

- The American army is part of the American people.

- They employ their men and women in the Armed Forces, which attack the Muslims.

From his constant attention to the question of “innocent blood,” it would seem that Bin Laden sees it as a vulnerability. With this mindset, he would probably disagree with some of the measures employed by Zarqawi’s followers and allies in Iraq. Indeed, some observers see Zawahiri’s 2005 “Letter to Zarqawi” as an effort by Al-Qaeda’s leadership to curtail the wanton brutality occurring there.¹⁶ Although the authenticity of that text is questionable, Zarqawi ostensibly felt some pressure from somewhere to defend his actions. Abu Mus’ab published his own doctrinal tract, which argues against wanton killing but justifies bloodletting on the basis of circumstances.¹⁷ The same concern over excessive brutality is reflected in the efforts of Iraqi insurgents to differentiate honorable resistance from terrorism.

Thus, Bin Laden caveats his targeting, which in itself seems to be fairly well defined. Can the same be said of his desired end state? Many observers contend that he seeks the restoration of a pan-Islamic caliphate. That view, however, seems uninformed. Bin Laden’s geostrategic perspective is very selective, while his concept of the caliphate is quite vague.

Bin Laden’s Geostrategic Perspective

From a geostrategic perspective, Bin Laden’s first concern is his homeland—Saudi Arabia. He is indignant over the monarchy’s decision to allow U.S. troops to use Saudi Arabia as a stage for strikes against Muslim Iraq and at Saudi Arabia’s policies on Israel, Palestine, and oil, which ignore the interests of Muslims. In his view, the Islamic holy land has been desecrated and “sold”

to infidel interests. He sets forth his case in several of his earlier public statements and returns to it in “Depose the Tyrants.” Bin Laden argues that, being a leader of veteran mujahideen, he should have been summoned to defend Saudi Arabia against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in 1990, but the monarchy succumbed to the pressure of the Crusader-Zionist alliance, as it consistently did in previous and subsequent decisions.

Bin Laden’s second concern is Palestine, which takes on special significance because of its Islamic beliefs.¹⁸ Bin Laden asserts that this territory that had been part of the Islamic dominion should never have been ceded to non-Muslim control, nor should any Muslim regime have ever endorsed such an event. The Temple Mount (al-Harâm al-Sharîf) in Jerusalem is Islam’s third holiest site. It is the first direction of prayer (qibla) and is held to be the place of Muhammad’s night journey to heaven and point of assembly of true believers on the final day of time. Bin Laden raises these points in his first major statement, “The Betrayal of Palestine,” and returns to them in subsequent ones.

Also of note is that Bin Laden shows no concern whatsoever for Damascus, the last of the four holiest sites of Islam. On this point, his perspective seems somewhat less than comprehensive.

He does, however, show concern for Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. He laments the pre-2003



Nineteen Airmen died and hundreds were injured in the terrorist attack at Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on 25 June 1996.

U.S.-led bombing and international sanctions that directly and indirectly caused Muslim deaths in Iraq. In his address “To the People of Iraq,” he calls on Iraqis to recognize their common Muslim bond and encourages them to continue the resistance to U.S. intervention. However, he offers no vision of the aftermath of the struggle, perhaps realizing that the emergence of a Sunni Islamist regime is a low probability. Nor does he draw notice to the strategic importance of Iraq, given its proximity to both Arabia and Palestine. To Bin Laden, Iraq has significance only as a land of jihad.

Afghanistan also has such significance, although its merits go beyond that. The country is renowned as the site of the physical Al-Qaeda (the base established by the Mujahid Abu Ubaida al-Ban-shiri) as well as Bin Laden’s one-time home in exile. Bin Laden frequently extols it as the place where Muslims won a jihad against the Soviets and established an Islamic emirate. The mujahideen of Afghanistan deserve the acclaim of all Muslims and, after the turn of events, their support against the Karzai regime.

The Taliban is not giving up its effort to regain power, yet it is not making much headway. Meanwhile, Bin Laden ostensibly has a new safe haven, and Pakistan holds the key to both his and the Taliban’s prospects. Bin Laden is highly supportive of the Islamists of Pakistan, while he is highly critical of Pakistan’s President Pervez Musharraf’s regime for its support (albeit reluctant) for America’s war on terror.¹⁹ Bin Laden and Musharraf seem to be holding one another in check.

Apart from the five lands noted, Bin Laden’s statements summarily recognize the historic importance of Somalia, Sudan, Lebanon, and Bosnia; the ongoing importance of Chechnya and Kashmir; and the emerging importance of Indonesia and the Philippines for the jihadist movement. However, he does not suggest an interrelation among the places or hint at a possible scenario for victory. There seem to be no strategic thoughts (in the Western sense), just the intent to promote jihad against the infidels wherever circumstances avail. Granted, Bin Laden also calls for insurrection against the “apostate regimes” in Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, Yemen, and the Persian Gulf; however, significant gaps remain in this broader view, suggesting that it does not reflect a deep strategy.

Apparent Anomalies

The first of several apparent anomalies is Bin Laden’s virtual disregard of Algeria. One might expect him to extol Algeria as a model of rebellion against unjust rule and a wellspring of mujahideen. His silence remains a matter of conjecture. However, he might be loath to draw attention to the site of enduring Muslim-on-Muslim brutality, since he otherwise seems intent on dissociating himself from the depredations of neo-Kharijism or takfirism.

Bin Laden is similarly reserved about Egypt, another Sunni-dominant Arab country. He might have pointed to its importance in Islamic history as the site of al-Azhar and the base for Saladin’s drive against the crusaders. He might have praised the Egyptians who championed militant Islam: Sayyid Qutb and the assassins of Anwar Sadat. It may be that Bin Laden simply avoids discussing Egypt in deference to his colleagues from the Egyptian Group and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Whatever the reason, the silence is conspicuous. As already noted, Syria is similarly neglected.

Bin Laden shows relatively no interest in Iran and the wider Shi’ite world. When he speaks of jihad in Lebanon, he recalls the conflict between the Israeli invaders and the Palestinian émigrés, not the Hezbollah militias. The potential geostrategic dilemma is that Iran blocks the land-link between the eastern (Afghanistan-Pakistan) and western (Arabia-Palestine-Iraq) fronts of the jihadist movement.²⁰ The physical link might be maritime, but this point goes unmentioned. He also virtually ignores another large part of the Islamic world—the largely Turkic lands of Central Asia.

Lack of Envisioned End State

As we have seen, Bin Laden’s vision of strategic geography seems spotty. In addition, a consideration of doctrine also seems to be lacking. Bin Laden vaguely alludes to the restoration of the caliphate in two of his major statements; however, he takes no position on relevant doctrinal questions.²¹ Must the caliph be of Arab ancestry and, more particularly, of Qurashi lineage? What should the forum and method be for selecting the caliph or, alternatively, deposing him? What are the caliph’s powers? Where is the seat of the caliphate? He addresses none of these critical issues.²² Indeed, it might be counterproductive to broach them, since

they are all potentially divisive. Still, how does one direct a movement without some explicit vision of the end state?

Certain U.S. officials and commentators will not let go of the threat-image of a revived caliphate. Advocates of this view suggest that Bin Laden has deferred to his colleagues on matters of strategy, citing the supposed words of Zarqawi and Zawahiri. Journalist Fouad Hussein's "Seven Steps to the Caliphate," which is attributed to Zarqawi, projects struggle beyond 2016.²³ The scenario is that the mujahideen will triumph in Iraq, the center of the movement. They will then take Syria, then Arabia. Zawahiri's supposed "Letter to Zarqawi" suggests four stages to the "restoration of the caliphate" and emphasizes the central importance of Egypt and the Levant (Syria, and Palestine). Neither text addresses the issues noted above. Assuming that these views are genuine, they are sufficiently inconsistent to cause us to doubt the existence of any definitive scheme to establish a new caliphate.²⁴

It is quite likely that Bin Laden's end state is really a commonwealth of Sunni Muslim countries with governments that respect Islamic law, not some monolithic caliphate. He asserts his purpose is simply to motivate the youth of Islamic societies to undertake jihad, to promote a broader movement.²⁵ Bin Laden is certainly not the self-styled leader of all mujahideen forces or the enforcer of doctrinal cohesion among allies. In cases where he offers military advice, it lacks proficiency. He fails to realize that the terrain conditions that accommodated the defense-in-depth scheme in eastern Afghanistan do not exist in central Iraq or other areas of conflict.²⁶ For the sake of a common goal, Bin Laden is willing to cooperate with groups whose doctrine he considers to be beyond the pale of Islam.²⁷ His strategic sense seems to be that actual and latent struggles can be self-directing, but complementary in distracting the enemies' focus, attriting their assets, and eroding their resolve.²⁸ Bin Laden also suggests that America's willingness to engage militarily abets the conditions that will bring about its failure.

Appropriate Countermeasures

Given this analysis of the myth and movement of global jihad, we must ask: What are the appropriate countermeasures for societies or societal sectors

under jihadist attack? First, we will consider what information operations efforts might deflate Bin Laden's myth of grievance, and then, what counterinsurgency efforts might contain the jihadist movement.

Information operations. To deflate Bin Laden's myth of grievance, it seems imperative to focus on the catalyst—the need to erase shame. The right recourse would be to avoid evoking shame and humiliation and to try to bestow honor and esteem. However, this might be difficult to do because American journalists, moviemakers, scholars, and politicians are free to convey messages that may be humiliating to Muslims. Still, public diplomacy and foreign information programs might highlight official and private messages that accord honor. Perhaps the more effective work could be done at the local, vice society-wide, level. We will return to this consideration later.

Substantive grievances cannot be redressed short of a radical change in U.S. regional policies. However, the grievances on principle do lend themselves to counter-appeals. To offset the anti-materialist theme, it might be effective to draw attention to the mujahid's obligations to his extended family—as opposed to lost opportunity to fulfill oneself in this life, as might be viable in the West. We might, for example, call attention to the passage in the Quran that says, "Your Lord decreed that you worship only Him and serve parents well, whether one or both of them attains old age with you; do not grumble (say "uff") at them or chide them but talk to them respectfully."²⁹ To offset the anti-elitist theme, it might be advantageous to play to it. In other words, in-country U.S. officials could broadcast festive greetings (on appropriate occasions) to the local people, as distinct from the government. Last, to counter the anti-civic theme, it would be productive to show a willingness to work with and through non-elected leaders: ulema (religious scholars) and tribal sheikhs. It would be doubly productive to treat them with honor.

The most obvious vulnerability is Bin Laden's sensitivity to being branded a neo-Kharijite. He has taken on allies of convenience, although he remains critical of their beliefs and practices. This is risky for Bin Laden because he cannot readily disassociate himself from allies who commit atrocities. An obvious priority for information warfare would be a sustained negative publicity campaign

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to compel him to break with the takfirists and other extremists. The Saudi Government is already taking measures to discredit Bin Laden with the Muslim masses. The U.S. interagency community should support and expand that endeavor with technical and diplomatic assistance. The main effort should stay with the Saudis and other Arab allies, because they have people with far more credibility to exploit differences in Islamic doctrine. Appeals by Western infidels, even well-qualified ones, are likely to be dismissed summarily, if not considered as further affronts to Muslim dignity.

Counterinsurgency efforts. The U.S. interagency community should keep a low profile when lending active counterinsurgency support to friendly governments in such countries as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Relevant measures include assistance with surveillance, collection of information, and special teams' skill training, in contrast to direct involvement in active operations.

Muslim communities that have been victimized by takfirists or neo-Kharijites might be willing to mobilize an irregular self-defense force. The U.S. assistance effort could be directed toward them, provided the host government has no objection to using irregulars. This recourse is probably more feasible in Afghanistan or Iraq, where the governments are still revamping internal security structures.

Strategic Issues

The low-profile approach should also be considered for strategic issues. Bin Laden clearly seeks to bait the United States into overextending itself. He reflects that "White House leadership, which is so keen to open up war fronts for its various corporations, whether in the field of arms, oil, or construc-

tion, has also contributed to remarkable results for Al-Qaeda."³⁰ Many observers would agree that the intervention in Iraq not only detracted from the war on terrorism, but also created new opportunity for the jihadist movement. The United States should be cautious about making another such major commitment of resources. The attendant question, though, is whether Bin Laden can create compelling circumstances to lure the United States into another major move. He is certainly not now in a good position to orchestrate rebellions in Africa, the Levant, or Southeast Asia. Of the several countries he targets for regime overthrow, Pakistan seemingly holds the most strategic importance.

Bin Laden addressed one of his major statements to "Our Brothers in Pakistan," after domestic violence occurred there on 24 September 2001. In the statement, he laments the deaths of people who protested the regime's alliance with the United States, and he encourages dedication to jihad. He says, "It is no surprise that the Muslim nation in Pakistan will rise up to defend its Islam, for it is considered Islam's first line of defense in this region.... We exhort our Muslim brothers in Pakistan to fight with all their might to prevent the American Crusader forces from conquering Pakistan and Afghanistan."³¹ He exhorts "the brothers in Pakistan" at the closing of "Terror for Terror" and asserts in "The Example of Vietnam" that "we will not let Pakistan and its people stand alone."³²

These words alone do not convey Pakistan's true strategic importance. The country has roughly 150 million people and constitutes a large sector of the Muslim world. An Islamist insurrection there would present a major problem for the region; an Islamist takeover would present an even greater one. Afghanistan's eastern and southern borders would experience more hostility. The maritime route from Baluchistan to Arabia would be more open to militants' use. The Kashmir conflict would inevitably be heightened. Nuclear-capable India would be unnerved. Last, Pakistan's nuclear weaponry might slip from responsible control.

Such a crisis would certainly burden the United States, and Bin Laden might consider provoking it in a more determined way. However, while an Islamist uprising might give him the advantage, it might also provoke decisive U.S. assistance to the Musharraf regime, which could consequently

jeopardize Bin Laden's current relative safety in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area.

The U.S. Government faces an equal dilemma. If it exerts too much pressure on Islamabad to operate against Bin Laden and other militants in the border regions, it could provoke the Islamist uprising that abets Bin Laden's cause. There seems to be a stalemate, albeit one that might be broken by developments within Pakistan's society.

At this point, the relevant countermeasures have been noted, and the purpose of the analysis has been fulfilled. Nonetheless, this is not a complete

strategy for defeating global jihad. In addition to information and counterinsurgency operations, the interagency effort must address the internal development of countries whose societies are susceptible to Bin Laden's jihadist appeal. Neither conditions of poverty and low quality of life nor perceptions of abasement and social injustice are direct causes of revolt. All these factors, however, cause shame, and shame is what the jihadists are keen on exploiting. The daunting thought is that the internal development aspect of the remedy will take decades to effect. **MR**

NOTES

1. See, for example, Paul Jackson, "Legacy of Bitterness: Insurgency in North West Rwanda," in *Small Arms and Insurgencies* 15, 1 (Spring 2004): 19-37; Thomas M. McKenna and Barbara O. Metcalf, eds., *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Johnny Ryan, "Justifying Terror: Histories of Persecution in Islamist and Irish Republican Terrorist Campaigns" (Master's thesis, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2005), online at <www.geocities.com/x4401/w-terror.html>, accessed 27 September 2006.
2. Bard E. O'Neil, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*, rev. ed. (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2005), 99-103.
3. Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], as amended through 8 August 2006).
4. *Ibid.*
5. Osama bin Laden, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, ed. Bruce Lawrence, trans. David Howarth (London and New York: Verso, 2005).
6. A complete English version of Bin Laden's "Declaration of Jihad" is online at <www.terrorismfiles.org/individuals/declaration_of_jihad1.html>, accessed 26 September 2006. For a complete English translation of "More Operations, Long-Term Truce," see Open Source Center, online at <www.fbis.gov/portal/server.pt>.
7. Arabic hadith are nonrevolatory sayings by or about the Prophet Muhammad. The two cited are from the collections of Ibn Malik and Ibn Muslim, respectively. For context, see Bin Laden, *Messages*, 264.
8. For examples of many instances where Bin Laden uses these designations, see *Messages*, 17, 46.
9. Quran 89:11-14, as translated in Bin Laden, *Messages*, 247.
10. See Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 124-26. For more information about Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's career, see Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī* (Berkeley: University of California, 1968 and 1983); Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and Abdul: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997).
11. Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 90-96.
12. David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 34-35.
13. Joyce M. Davis provides many excellent native testimonials concerning the motive of erasing shame in *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance, and Despair in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
14. Bin Laden, *Messages*, 119.
15. *Ibid.*, 263.
16. The "letter" from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, dated 9 July 2005, is online at <www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report/2005/zacahiri-zar-qawi-letter_9jul2005.htm>, accessed 26 September 2006.

17. Zarqawi's tract appeared on Internet Arabic message boards on 22 March 2005 and was edited and translated by Northeast Intelligence Network Strategic Arabic Translations. See online at <www.homlandsecurityus.com>.
18. Bin Laden clearly sets forth his first and second priority concerns in "Terror for Terror," in *Messages*, 127.
19. See Bin Laden, "To our Brothers in Pakistan," in *Messages*, 99-102, and comments on 143-44.
20. Bin Laden uses the term "axes" in *Messages*, 204.
21. *Ibid.*, 121, 194.
22. For the classic Islamic doctrine of the caliphate, see Hourani, chapter 1. For early Islamic modernist thinking on the revival of the caliphate, see *Ibid.*, 239-44, 273.
23. For commentary on and a synopsis of the "Seven Steps," see Yassin Mush-arbash, "What al-Qaida Really Wants," Spiegle Online, 12 August 2005, at <<http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/0,1518,369448,00.html>>.
24. The journalistic "Seven Steps" text is certainly not an original source statement. I believe Zawahiri's letter is a forgery, albeit a good one, considering anomalies in its style and content. Certain words and phrases suggest an underlying Western mindset, while allusions to the Taliban are quite inconsistent with Zawahiri's more recent "Obstacles to Jihad" (speech posted to Syrian Islamic Forum, 11 December 2005).
25. See Bin Laden, *Messages*, 69, 77, 86, 107-108.
26. *Ibid.*, 150, 181-83.
27. Various Internet sources allude to doctrinal disagreements among jihadists. See, for example, the section on Isam al-Turabi's testimonies in "Bin Laden's Life in Sudan—Part One," excerpt from a Foreign Broadcast Information Service translation of the Arabic text of al-Quds al-Arabi, 24 November 2001, 13, online at <www.fpa.gov>; F. Gregory Gause III, "Saudi-U.S. Relations and the War on Terrorism" (address to Foreign Policy Association, New York, 17 October 2002), available from <www.fpa.org/topics_info2414/topics_info_show.htm?doc_id=126331>, accessed 28 September 2006.
28. Bin Laden's scheme seems to fit the "leaderless resistance" model, which has emerged in the terrorism-analyst community. See Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 274-80. For another perspective on this phenomenon, see Sherifa D. Zuhur, *A Hundred Osamas: Islamist Threats and the Future of Counterinsurgency* (Strategic Studies Institute Monograph, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, January 2006), online at <www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=636>, accessed 28 September 2006.
29. Quran, Sūrat al-Isrā', 22; my translation.
30. Bin Laden, *Messages*, 241-42.
31. *Ibid.*, 101.
32. *Ibid.*, 129, 143.

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