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Global Terrorism

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Introduction

After the events of the last three years, with massive terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, Bali, Casablanca, Istanbul and, latterly, Madrid, it has been widely accepted that we face a totally new kind of threat in the twenty-first century, that of a globalized indiscriminate violence inspired by an incendiary ideology derived from Islam and directed against the West. It is as if the 1990s were merely an inter-regnum between the familiar stability of the Cold War – despite fears of "mutually assured destruction" – and the uncertainties of the present in which the Manichean struggle between good and evil has begun once again, reifying irrational hatreds and threatening the virtues of modern civilisation. The concept of a rules-based international community has been increasingly side-lined in the face of the imperious necessity to confront and conquer this new threat, even if it threatens to become an eternal battle in which victory can never be assured.

Europe has been swept into this new version of global strife, even though the assumptions behind it are rooted in a security vision that the European Union was designed to overcome[1]. The original purpose of the Union, after all, was to end the warfare that had almost destroyed Europe in the previous century and it has been the mechanisms by which this was achieved that have informed Europe's nascent common policies towards the wider world, not least the Middle East and North Africa. The danger now is that the contradiction between its supposedly post-modern values of principled compromise and sovereign derogation and the Hobbesian world of American exceptionalism and the globalized projection of its national interests[2] will undermine Europe's achievements and, more importantly, Europe's relations with its southern neighbours.

Yet, it is worth considering whether the analysis of this current situation is correct. The ironically comforting assumption – comforting because it contrasts ideological and therefore moral opposites – that we are engaged yet again in an ideological battle, rather than in a political crisis should be questioned. Terrorism is a very nasty weapon but it has its antecedents and purposes. It is not primarily an ideological weapon but generally uses a technique of inculcating fear to realise specific political objectives. Those objectives, in themselves, have their origins in political problems, usually left unaddressed until attention is drawn to them through violence. Islam – or, rather, an extremist vision of political action legitimised by reference to Islam – may have been rhetorical vehicle used to justify such action but it is neither the cause nor the explanation. A closer analysis of the seminal events of September 11, 2001 and of the background to them may help to clarify this.

The events of September 11, 2001

It has become a truism that the events of September 11, 2001 have achieved the status of a turning point in global politics, marking a paradigmatic shift in international affairs. Not only did they mark the opening of the "War on Terror" but they also catalysed the move away from the concept of a world community controlled by international law through the United Nations towards one where the moral certitudes and national interests of a single super-power would be expressed through pre-emptive intervention. In many ways, too, these changes also reflect a step backwards in the paradigms that govern the relations between states, from the post-colonial era towards the late nineteenth century vision of liberal imperialism, now articulated as "reluctant imperialism"[3] and the moral justification for pre-emptive intervention.

There has also been a tendency amongst commentators to consider the events of September 11, 2001 as something unique in the annals of modern terrorism. They were, but only in two respects: the number of people who died (3,421) and the audaciousness of the planning involved[4]. The audacity itself consisted of the imagination to see that box-cutters could be smuggled on to aircraft despite modern controls and would be effective tools of intimidation, and of the ability to plan the simultaneous hijacks and to acquire the training to fly a modern jet aircraft. In all other respects, what had occurred had either been envisaged or had been attempted before, whether this involved an attack in the United States, the use of aircraft for such an attack, or the symbolic manipulation of a target involving some aspect of American political or economic power.

(1) The United States had been subject to attack by foreign groups in recent years on at least one other occasion. This was on February 26, 1993, when an attempt was made to collapse one of the twin towers in the World Trade Centre into the other, thus precipitating their collapse – the event that actually occurred on September

11, 2001. The agency for the collapse was to be an explosion in the car-park at the base of one of the towers. The charge, which was concealed in a hired van and which was made from fertiliser, was insufficient for the task but sixty people were killed and a further 1,000 injured. Attacks had also been planned on the Holland Tunnel in New York and on the Lincoln Center there.

What is worth noting is that this attack was organised by a militant group around the blind Egyptian Islamist leader, Shaykh Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, then based in Brooklyn after an adventurous career in Egypt which he had left with CIA help[5]. He is now in prison in New York for his role in the incident. The group was also betrayed by its own clumsiness[6] and because it had been infiltrated by an Egyptian informer. It is also worth noting that the group was not introduced into the United States for the purpose of the attack but was recruited when already there by Ramzi Yusef, a mysterious figure of Pakistani origin but who grew up in Kuwait and is now serving 240 years in prison in the United States for this and other offences. He has now been identified as a very early al-Qa'ida operative and is said to be the cousin of the chief al-Qa'ida planner of the World Trade Centre attack, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, now in American custody.

(2) The idea of using aircraft was also not new. In December 1994, on Christmas Eve, an Air France aircraft at Algiers airport was hijacked by an alleged GIA (*Groupes Islamiques Armés – Jam'at Islamiyya Musalaha*) group with the express intention of crashing it into the Eiffel Tower – to highlight the struggle in Algeria and France's role in it. Luckily, the hijackers were disarmed and killed by French commandos at Marseilles before they could realise their objectives. Earlier that year, a disgruntled Federal Express employee had hijacked an airliner and seriously injured the crew in an attempt to crash the aircraft on the Federal Express headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee. Then again, in 1994, a light aircraft had been flown at the White House, where it crashed into a tree, killing the pilot.

There had also been plenty of plans to carry out such attacks. In 1986, a militant Islamic group had planned to hijack an airliner in Pakistan and blow it up over Tel Aviv. Somewhat later, in 2001, the Berlusconi government revealed news of a plot to attack the American president, George Bush, during the July 2001 G-8 summit, either by crashing into his aircraft as it landed or by crashing into a building in which the summit was actually held. Ramzi Yusef himself had much earlier planned "Project Bojinka" which involved hijacking twelve Jumbo aircraft with their passengers, seized from Delta, United and North-Western Airlines, and either crashing them into each other in flight or blowing them up over a two-day period. This plan, that would also have required very detailed planning – like the Twin Tower attacks – was due to take place in 1994, just one year after the first World Trade Center attack. It is estimated that this attack alone would have involved the deaths of around 4,000 people, so attacks on the scale of the World Trade Center in 2001 had also been envisaged long before. According to his accomplice, Abdul Hakim Murad, who was arrested in Manila after a fire broke out in the flat they shared, he had also planned to attack buildings with aircraft as well.

(3) In fact, he had made plans to attack the CIA building in Langley, Virginia, the Pentagon, the White House, the Sears Tower in Chicago, the Trans-America Tower in San Francisco and, of course, the World Trade Center. Even after his arrest had taken place, there were further plans to attack American symbols inside the United States. Ahmed Ressam, an Algerian from Canada – again recruited after he had settled down in the Algerian community in Montreal, not specially sent for the task – was arrested just before the end of 1999 at the American border with explosives, apparently intended for a bomb attack on Los Angeles airport and on the Space Needle in Seattle.

In other words, the September 11 attacks were not quite as original or unexpected as might have been thought but they were dramatic in attracting attention to the group responsible – al-Qa'ida[7] - and to the Saudi national who was its ringleader, Usama bin Ladin. They were dramatic in another sense, too, for the scale of the losses instilled a sense of anger and fear, thus adding to the group's self-image and its stature in the Islamic world. For, although very few Muslims actually sympathised with what it had done – and the widespread expressions of sympathy throughout the region for the victims in the United States, even in Iran, were absolutely sincere – there was also a sense that Western, particularly American, arrogance and indifference to the plight of the Middle East and, indeed, the wider world, had been punctured. Even as far afield

4. According to the St Petersburg Times in Florida (September 8, 2002), 2775 persons died in the World Trade Center, including the passengers on the aircraft that crashed into them, together with 19 hijackers, 184 persons in the Pentagon explosion, 40 in the aircraft that crashed in Pennsylvania and that is believed to have been intended for the White House, 60 policemen and 343 firemen.

5. He had been a radical teacher at the al-Azhar mosque-university in Cairo who became involved in the activities of the *tanzin 'anqudi*, the autonomous Islamist cells that flourished throughout Egypt in the late 1970s. He had issued a *fatwa* (religious decree) which was subsequently interpreted as justifying the assassination of President Sadat. He had been seconded by that time (1981) to the Islamic university of Assiyut, where there was an attempted uprising timed to coincide with Sadat's assassination. By that time, however, he had been transferred to Fayyoum oasis, to isolate him. He had, however, played a significant role in organising the recruitement of Egyptians for the struggle in Afghanistan so, when in the late 1980s, the Egyptian government decided it had had enough of him, he was able to persuade the CIA to help him escape to the United States!

6. The van was hired in the real name and address of one of the group, so – once its number plate had been located – so was he!

7. The term has a studiously neutral sound about it for it merely means the "base", which is what its original purpose really was!

8. Wilkinson P (1986), *Terrorism and the liberal state*, Macmillan, London (2nd edition); 51.

9. "The use of violence for political ends" .

10. The term "terrorism" means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. The term "international terrorism" means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. The term "terrorist group" means any group practising, or having significant subgroups that practise, international terrorism.

This is taken from US State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1995*, Office of the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, Washington. It should be noted that the term "noncombatant" includes civilians and military personnel who are unarmed or not on duty. In addition, attacks on military installations or armed military personnel when a state of military hostilities does not exist are also considered to be terrorist acts.

as Latin America and Africa, there were comments about the events that expressed this as well as a sense of profound shock and horror.

In short, the al-Qa'ida group, as the group ostensibly responsible for the attack – it soon claimed responsibility in any case – achieved one of the objectives of any such group which is to demonstrate its potency in affecting the public debate and to persuade its chosen audience of its effectiveness. In this sense, the other consequences of its action – the war in Afghanistan and the "War on Terror" – were probably less important reverses than the demonstration effect it had achieved within the Muslim world in both articulating that world's often inchoate resentments and anger at Western behaviour and in acting upon them, even if its methods and practices were abhorrent. It had achieved this through terrorism – a term in this context I take to mean "coercive intimidation", the definition used by Paul Wilkinson in his original study, *Terrorism and the Liberal State*[8]. This definition, which I understand as the use of coercive violence for political ends, has the advantage that it is formally neutral, as was the case with the British government's own definition of the phenomenon up to the 2000 Terrorism Act[9], unlike the United States' Department of State definition[10] or the 1998 Arab League definition which is drawn from the Egyptian Law 97 of 1992[11].

The importance of the definition for an understanding of the al-Qa'ida phenomenon is, it seems to me, twofold. Firstly, it removes the events of September 11, 2001 from the realm of the cultural. That is to say, if it can be described in terms that apply to other, similar acts designed to achieve political outcomes, we can be fairly sure that it is itself an essentially political phenomenon that has nothing to do with an clash of cultures or civilisations[12]. This is, after all, an argument that has been widely used in Europe and America, despite the denials of politicians, to explain the unique horror of the event and to justify the response. Secondly, it means that the ambiguities inherent in the general phenomenon will apply here as well and may help to explain why it is that an event considered by the civilised world as being uniquely horrible should have occurred, why it was not always viewed in the same way elsewhere, and, more important, what can really be done to prevent its endless repetition.

The major ambiguity involved with terrorism lies in its relationship to the state and in the definition of the moral status of terrorist acts. Terrorism is primarily the prerogative of non-state actors; groups and organisations that do not enjoy the advantages of states. Most importantly, they are not accorded the innate rights that establish states as the uniquely authorised mechanisms for imposing social order or the embodiment of collective identity[13] and that allow them to articulate the collective views of their citizens in the international arena. The state is, therefore, both the entity with the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence[14] and "the actuality of the ethical idea"[15]. This is important because it allows the state to define what we may and may not do through a system of laws in which we are tacitly engaged. It also means that the state may sanction behaviour of a kind that is normally forbidden in pursuit of its own interests. Thus it can legalise killing, as it does in times of war, an act that it would otherwise rigorously repress.

A problem arises, therefore, if this monopoly of the state over ethical and moral considerations and definitions is contested. What happens if you cannot morally accept the dictates of the state, as expressed through its government – which is, after all, one of the expressions of state power? What happens, furthermore, if you also believe that the principles on which the actions of the state are based cannot be changed by the normal political processes; by changing its government or government policy through public pressure or the democratic process – a particularly important concern if the state itself is not democratic? What happens, too, if you believe that you are subject to the dictates of another state to which your own government inclines and with which you morally cannot agree? And, finally, what happens if you believe that the state to which you are subject is inherently an immoral construct? These are, of course, profound personal dilemmas but they can become collective drivers for the construction of an ideology of resistance and rejection if no alternative means of addressing the situation seem to exist.

This seems to me to be precisely the dilemma that *al-Qa'ida*, along with all groups engaged in a similar kind of struggle, implicitly seeks to articulate in its rhetoric and

The meaning of terrorism

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Conflicting Moralities

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11. "Any act of violence or of threatening violence regardless of its motives or purpose that takes place in the execution of a criminal undertaking…." League of Arab States (April 1998), *The anti-terrorism agreement*, issued by Arab justice and interior ministers, Cairo.
12. Huntington S.P., "The clash of civilisations," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993).
13. This refers not only to the concept of the nation-state as the political embodiment of the "imagined community" of the nation but also to the idea of the legal personality of a state as embodied in the 1933 Montevideo Convention .
14. Weber M. (1921), "Politik als Beruf", in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, Munich; 397.
15. Hegel G.W.F. (1821, 1991), *Elements of the philosophy of Right*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; 275.

why it is that its specific claims and concerns are also part of a wider class of political action. The essential point here is that action that appears intolerable to the victim is seen as acceptable, even necessary, to its perpetrator because of his perceptions of the moral status of his target. Thus the specific content of the rhetoric that a movement such *as al-Qa'ida* uses to justify what it does is, at this level irrelevant, although it is of crucial relevance when we come to consider what the responses to it should be. In other words, the particular argument that it has with states, be they Arab or Muslim states, or be they states in the West, is an example of a general phenomenon that has a long history and a universality that the proponents of the "clash of civilisations" do not recognise.

Asymmetry and Discriminations

In essence, in all these situations the moral and ethical right of the state to act on behalf of its citizens is challenged by questioning its innate legitimacy, so that conflict between the state and non-state actors emerges. There is, of course, nothing particularly new about this; such conflicts have always existed and scholars of warfare have termed the resulting conflicts as "asymmetric warfare" or "low intensity conflict". Terrorism is undoubtedly within this class of conflict, alongside guerrilla warfare and national liberation struggles. It is, however, more than that and has two unique characteristics that make it unmistakable despite the difficulty that specialists of the subject have had in trying to define it precisely.

The first is that, because the asymmetry is usually acute for terrorist groups, they make use of unbounded action. That is to say that the coercive aspect of their violence appears to be effectively indiscriminate, hence the victimisation of civilians ostensibly unconnected with the cause of the violence itself. In fact, it can be argued that the violence used for coercive effect is not as indiscriminate as it is usually portrayed but it is undoubtedly directed at persons who have no conceivable personal link with the grievance concerned. The classic response to this is to be found in the "testament" of Emile Henry.

He was an anarchist in Paris in the 1890s who bombed a mining company's offices and then a café, the Café Terminus, in February 1894. The tradition is that, after his arrest – which was virtually immediate – he was asked why he had killed so many innocent people in the café and he replied, "Nobody is innocent!" In fact, he replied "There are no innocent bourgeois", for the café had been the haunt of the professional middle classes, individuals who, at that time, Henry along with many others, held responsible as an economic and political group for the appalling exploitation of the French working class, those who only had their labour to sell. His testament, which was a statement to the jury whose verdict enabled his sentence of death – he was executed in May 1894 – is a detailed and reasoned exposition of this argument[16].

Thus the apparently indiscriminate nature of terrorist violence in fact has a certain specificity about it, for there are groups of people who are considered legitimate targets precisely because they are members of the group, not because of their individual actions. The principle, of course can have much wider ramifications but, in the case of terrorism, it is an integral part of the process itself and, almost by definition, means that innocent individuals will be the intended targets and not simply unfortunate incidental victims. Thus Westerners are legitimate targets because they are Americans, Crusaders or Jews, in the terms of the 1996 and 1998 *fatwas* issued by Usama bin Ladin[17], and have been collectively responsible for crises in the Muslim world, specifically those linked to Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Iraq as well as to the imagined more generalised moral decline there.

Structure and Praxis

This leads on to the second aspect of the phenomenon of terrorism that seems to be central. This is that there is really no such thing as a terrorist group, in the sense that this is its sole and bounded purpose. Terrorism is not an ideology in itself, it is simply a mode of action, designed to achieve a particular political result. In other words, there are only terrorist acts, not terrorist groups although, of course, if the group solely or primarily engages in terrorist acts we may be justified in referring to it as a terrorist group. This is important because, at some stage, those seeking to contain or eliminate the phenomenon have to address the reasons why terrorism occurs. If, for analytical purposes, the group's objectives are confused with the methods used to achieve them, then this process becomes extremely difficult, as the continuing crisis in the Occupied Territories demonstrates so clearly. Of course, common parlance does assimilate the group with the act but this tends to create precisely the kind of absolutist dichotomy that makes effective analysis and resolution of the phenomenon so difficult.

16. http://recollectionbooks.com/bleed/AnarchistTimeline2.htm or http://recollectionbooks.com/bleed/0212.htm

How, for example, should one classify *Hizbullah* in the Lebanon or *Hamas* in Palestine? Both have certainly carried out acts that were terrorist in nature, such as – in *Hizbullah's* earlier manifestations – the seizing of Westerners as hostages or the bombing of the US Marine and French army headquarters in Beirut in October 1983, with heavy loss of life in one of the first-ever suicide bombings. Yet, at the same time, it also provides essential social and medical services to the impoverished Shi'a Muslim populations of Southern Lebanon, particularly in the southern suburbs of Beirut. In addition, it has said that it would not attack Israel within its pre-1967 borders, nor has it done so, thus suggesting that its purpose was always bounded and political, not epiphenomenal in nature[18].

A similar argument could be made for *Hamas* in Palestine for, without the charity it provides, thousands of Palestinians would starve. Indeed, in the contemporary Muslim world, the list of such ambiguities would be very long indeed and it would highlight the absurdity of labelling certain organisations simply as international pariahs because of their alleged terrorist links. This, furthermore, merely discredits the very purpose of such classifications with the persons who are supposed to be persuaded of their utility; the populations who benefit from the other, charitable aspect of these organisations and who become the "sea" in which they can swim despite the hostility of Arab governments who are their primary target and of the West.

It may well be that the more global a group using terrorism may be in its reach, the more important the terrorist imperative may become, in the sense of self-justifying and self-fulfilling action. The group may then begin to acquire the characteristics of epiphemonenalism, whatever its political claims. It could be argued that *al-Qa'ida* runs the danger of falling into this trap and thereby justifying the total hostility with which it is approached by Western powers. Yet it continues to articulate a clear agenda, directed against Arab states that it considers corrupt and against Western states it considers their backers, as well as being responsible for the three great crises facing the Arab world – Iraq, Palestine and the degradation of Islamic society and polity[19], as the recent offer of a truce to Europe made clear.

Ideological Justification

Yet, even if a terrorist organisation such as al-Qa'ida, is in reality solely an organisation designed to achieve a political purpose through the use of terrorist acts directed at a class of people it condemns as morally or politically abhorrent, the fact that it has such a purpose should provide a means by which, eventually, engagement and resolution might be possible. We may, of course, discover that no accommodation is possible for the ideological differences are too great or the methods too horrific to be acceptable in the context of dialogue, so that confrontation is the only realistic approach. However, if that were to be the case, we would presumably need to convince Muslims that this were so, as we would need their active support, to overcome the problem of the "fish in the sea"[20]. In other words, whichever approach is to be adopted, it is essential to understand the ideology and objectives of the movement, whatever we may feel about the methods it uses and whatever outcome we seek.

The Extremist Ideal

This principle is, of course, true whatever the nature of the terrorist group involved, whether we are discussing ETA in Spain or the IRA in Ireland or longer ago, the terrorism arising from the New Left movement of the 1960s or irredentist European Fascism. It happens to be the case that the dominant form of terrorist violence that we have to address today arises from within the Islamic world and thus chooses a culturally resonant vehicle as the language through which to articulate its demands. Although the political issues that stimulate its activities are objectively largely independent of the vocabulary it uses, inevitably that vocabulary and the related syntax also structure its demands so that its own ideological definition of the issues and of itself cannot be totally separated from the issues themselves. In any kind of response, whether through negotiation or confrontation, we are obliged, therefore, to take these mechanisms of legitimisation into account. It is worthwhile, therefore to consider the cultural environment in which a movement such as *al-Qa'ida* situates its political demands.

In essence, the al-Qa'ida movement seeks an ideal Islamic community, in the terms it considers the Prophet Muhammad defined for the original Islamic community created in Medina in the early seventh century of the Common Era. This is enshrined in the Qur'an and in the Sunna, the practices and statements of the Prophet enshrined in

17. This is discussed in a famous article by a leading orientalist, Bernard Lewis, which was an initial and well-observed response to the original 1998 *fatwa*. See Lewis B., "License to kill (Islamic call to kill Jews and Americans), *Foreign Affairs*, November 1998; 14. There remains the case of innocent Muslims who are killed during a terrorist incident and here *fatwas* have been issued stating that such an outcome is permissible, even if to be regretted, and such persons will be admitted to Heaven. A *fatwa* is a statement of legal or doctrinal interpretation, issued by a recognised scholar. It has no binding authority on the Islamic community as a whole and can, in theory, be challenged by any other recognised scholar, although in some cases it may acquire undisputable status.

the *hadith*. It was a society that Muslims believe survived through the reigns of the first four caliphs of Islam, the *Rashidun* or "rightly-guided" caliphs. Were this to be done, its adherents believe, then it would be possible for every Muslim to live a life to ensure salvation and Muslim society would achieve its own perfection. It is implicit and integral to this view that Muslim society must be controlled by Muslims qualified to do so, through their emulation of the qualities of the Prophet and acceptance by the community itself. Thus the idea of non-Muslim control is morally and doctrinally unacceptable.

This is not, in itself, a particularly unusual view, although the particular variant espoused by *al-Qa'ida*, with its holistic intolerance and rigidity, is shared by very few Muslims indeed. There is a long tradition in the Muslim world of seeing contemporary circumstance as the consequence of the loss of the original ideal and there is, therefore, an equally long tradition of seeking to purify the Islamic corpus of accretions on this core-body of doctrine, practice and belief. Since Islam is acutely concerned with temporal order as well as with personal salvation there has always been a very important political dimension to such arguments that seem otherwise ostensibly concerned only with issues of morality and doctrine. On occasion, as with the Wahhabi movement[21], there has been an explicit political linkage that has persisted through to the present day, for it was the conversion of the al-Saud tribe to Wahhabism in the eighteenth century that eventually led to the creation of modern Saudi Arabia.

The Precursors

The key event in modern times to challenge this vision, however, was the advent of colonialism in the Middle East, an experience that conventionally begins with the Napoleonic conquest of Egypt in 1798. The French conquest was a profound cultural shock for Muslims as it raised serious questions about their geopolitical assumptions, particularly about the innate supremacy of Muslim society, given European technological domination. Throughout the nineteenth century, Muslims sought to analyse and respond to this, basing their arguments on the need to find inside Islamic society itself the dynamism to respond. European occupation, which began with the French occupation of Algeria in 1830[22], only made the issue more acute.

The most important response was generated in the 1860s by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani who argued that Islam did indeed contain the elements of an effective response to apparent European superiority; it too could generate the institutions which Europe had exploited to achieve its predominance. The route to success lay in a revaluation of the past, to a search for the moral and doctrinal core from which the institutions of a modern state and society could be constructed. In other words, by understanding the true meaning of the *salaf*, those who preceded the modern world – a term usually confined to those who had had direct experience of the original world of Islam, in the *Rashidun* period – contemporary success and modernisation could be achieved that would be consonant with Islamic values.

The ideas he put forward were enshrined in a movement known as the *salafiyya*, a modernist movement that inspired the early attempts to come to terms with the reality of European colonialism. It reached deep within intellectual society inside the Muslim world; at one time at the turn of the nineteenth century, Muhammad 'Abduh, the chief *qadi* (judge) of Egypt, was its main proponent and it profoundly influenced the anti-colonialist struggle. Colonial powers, however, had other objectives than those enshrined in the liberal imperialist ideal and were loathe to end their control. Even more important, Britain began, after it acquired the Palestine mandate in 1921, to encourage the development of the Jewish community in Palestine as promised in the Balfour Declaration. This was widely seen as a direct challenge to the integrity of the Islamic *umma* or community.

By the 1930s, little of the early optimism of the *salafiyya* movement remained and, instead, Muslims began to consider how they could escape the colonial yoke. One answer, since European military power – at least until the Second World War – seemed impregnable, was to turn inwards and re-Islamise society by example, demonstrating to a dispirited population the innate potential of Islam to revive their lives. This gave rise, in 1928, to the *Ikhwan Muslimin*, the Muslim Brotherhood. Another, which developed particularly in the 1940s and was directed specifically at the corruption of governments and their acquiescence in European – and, after 1945 – increasingly in American demands, was urban guerrilla warfare and terrorism. On occasion, the

18. Epiphenomenal terrorism, is terrorism undertaken for its own sake, where the act is in itself the objective and its justification, even if it is justified by arcane ideology. The Aum Shinrikyo movement would fall into this category.
19. See *the Guardian*, 16.04.2004 for the complete text.
20. "The guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea" Mao Tse Tung.
21. The Wahhabi movement was created by Muhammad Abd al-Wahab (1703-1791) who decreed that no item of doctrine or practice after the end of the third Islamic century would be acceptable. The al-Saud began their subsequent conquest of Arabia in 1763. Wahhabis follow the Hanbali school of Islamic law.
22. There had, of course, been earlier experiences, of which the Crusades in the eleventh and twelfth centuries are the most renowned but these long predated the colonial period. Britain had engaged in indirect control, after it eliminated piracy in the Persian Gulf and even planned a coaling station at Aden, but it had not created a colony. Similarly, Portugal and Spain had had coastal settlements along the North African coastline from the fifteenth century onwards but these, too, were hardly colonies. Imperial Russia, too, had threatened the Ottoman empire for at least a century before Napoleon's invasion.

two went hand-in-hand and behind both lay the shared fundamental conviction that the *salafiyya* would provide the path to success. Salafiyyism thus acquired a violent extremist fringe alongside the quietist search for self-improvement and revival.

With the end of the colonial period, the continued presence of neo-colonial influence, particularly over governments, and the failure of alternative paradigms, such as Arab nationalism, led back to the Salafiyyist ideal. By 1967, a major revival of Salafiyyist influence was underway. By now, however, its more activist fringe was informed by new ideas and objectives. In Egypt, Sayyid Qutb had laid out a new agenda to revitalise the original political vision and combat corrupt government through the concepts of *hukumiyya* and *jahiliyya*[23] whilst, in Pakistan earlier, Maulana Maududi had revived the old Islamic tradition of *jihad* to combat colonialism and its modern counterpart, neo-colonialism[24].

It has been the concept of *jihad* that has become key to understanding the nature of the modern radical movements in contemporary world, for modern *salafis*[25] are even more stringent than their predecessors in the sources that they will allow and in this respect they have become even more intolerant than the Wahhabi movement. Not only do they look to the first four *rashidun* Islamic caliphates – the so-called "rightly-guided caliphs" – they also reject any specific school of Islamic law[26], turning instead in an eclectic manner to those dicta in the original sources that best accord with the basic criteria of the early Islamic world as the guide to the creation of a new Islamic order. It is an order, furthermore, that is now to be achieved through *jihad*; the sole means to counter the corrupting effects of the continued neo-colonial Western presence in the Muslim world.

Jihad, for most Islamic theologians is a process of internal strife designed to achieve personal purification and betterment. Originally, however, it also meant warfare sanctioned by Islam; initially warfare to expand the Islamic world but for the past five hundred years at least, if not longer, it has meant a defensive war to protect the *umma* and region it occupies. It is this vision that informs the extremist fringe of the *salafi* movement today. It is a vision that has been given particular definition by the war in Afghanistan[27], largely because it was the intellectual instrument, propagated by *salafi* shaykhs and 'alims, whether mainstream or extremist, whereby Arabs were persuaded to participate, with up to 40,000 persons participating in the struggle and thousands more engaging in charity work amongst the Afghani refugees – or doing both.

During the conflict, the concept of *jihad* was given particular significance by Abdallah Azzam, a Palestinian educated in the al-Azhar mosque-university in Cairo and collaborator with Usama bin Ladin. He defined two types of *jihad*, *jihad* to harass the enemy in order to discourage attack upon the Islamic world and *jihad* to actually defend it against attack. The first kind of *jihad* was a collective responsibility in that any Muslim group could undertake it and thereby relieve other Muslims from doing so, but the second kind was an individual responsibility, as important as the observance of the five pillars of faith. The war in Afghanistan was of the second kind, thus obliging Muslims to ensure that the Soviet invasion should not succeed.

With the end of the war in Afghanistan, those who had been engaged soon found other arenas where Muslims were threatened; Bosnia, Chechniya and Kosovo to mention but the three most important. This Wiktorowiczq terms the "nomadic *jihad*" for those involved in it began to enter a world of unbounded perpetual conflict to protect the Islamic *umma*. However, most important for our purposes, is the *jihad* that is to be pursued within the Islamic world for, as Sayyid Qutb had made clear, Islamic states themselves fell far short of the Islamic ideal, particularly in view of their compromises with the West. Here the *salafis* had recourse to the teachings of a fourteenth century jurist, Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) who argued, in the context of the Mongols, that a Muslim had to accept the entire Islamic corpus to be considered a true member of the Muslim community.

The reason for this was that the Mongols did not fully endorse Islamic law, even though some of them had converted to Islam after their thirteenth and fourteenth century conquests. The Mongols had, incidentally, also ended the Abbasid caliphate, the emblem of Arab civilisation, in 1258 with their conquest of Baghdad and, in so doing, gave an enduring symbol to the Arab and Muslim world, for Baghdad has become the embodiment of the achievements of that Arab-Islamic civilisation and its capture

The Violent Alternative - *Jihad*

23. *Hukumiyya* – Islamic governance; *jahiliyya* – the ignorance of the pre-Islamic world of Arabia, hence, by extension, the state of the contemporary Islamic world unaware of the virtue of Islamic governance. See Sayyid Qutb (1965), *Ma'alim fi Tariq*, translated as "Signposts on the Way".

24. See Maududi, Maulana (1930), *al-Jihad fi'l-Islam*, translated as "The way of Jihad".

25. The *Salafiyya* movement itself underwent an eclipse in the 1960s being revived in the 1980s as a branch of the generalised political Islamic revival in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It was particularly centred in Northern Saudi Arabia where, as the *neo-Salafiyya* it was obsessively concerned with the outward manifestations of faith in conformity with the Rashidun period, thus shedding all links with the original *Salafiyya* movement. Only later did it become specifically political in nature.

26. There are traditionally four schools of legal interpretation in Sunni Islam; the Hanbali, Hanafi, Malaki and Shafi schools. A fifth school, the Ja'afari school, only applies to Shi'a Islam. Each school engages in legal interpretation and inference from the original sources of the Qur'an and the Sunna through a series of recognised rhetorical and logical mechanisms. None, however, innovates – except the Ja'afari school. One consequence of this is that when Salafis engage innovative thought within the constraints of the Islamic doctrines they accept the process of *ijtihad*. This word also comes from the same root as *jihad* and means striving for understanding. The significance of this is that orthodox Muslims have tended to agree that such innovation is neither necessary nor permitted but the willingness of the Salafis to do so gives them a considerable intellectual edge.

27. The intellectual and historical arguments that have produced modern Salafiyyist doctrine and that lie behind the al-Qa'ida movement have been excellently summarized in Wkitorowiczq Q. (n.d.), *The new global threat: transnational Salafis and Jihad*, http://groups.colgate.edu/aarislam/wiktorow.htm He also makes the point that the doctrine itself is explicitly based on doctrinal precept through carefully argued *fatwas* which are buttressed with precedents. The *fatwas* are designed to cover every conceivable eventuality so that no action is taken that has not been explicitly sanctioned by an authority that the *salafi* themselves accept – a person who may or may not be in the political, social and cultural mainstream.

Thus the issue of the use of weapons of mass destruction was addressed explicitly for the first time in mid-2003 by a shaykh who operates perfectly legitimately and openly in Saudi Arabia and who is not connected to the al-Qa'ida movement, Shaykh Nasir al-Fahad. He decided that they are legitimate for Muslims to use. Paz R (2003), "Yes to WMD: the first Islamist *fatwah* on the use of weapons of mass destruction", *PRISM Dispatches*, 1, 1 (May 2003).

and occupation by the United States today has, in consequence, a very unpleasant historical resonance in the contemporary Arab and Islamic world. This was also one of the reasons for the massive resentment of the past decade of sanctions against Iraq – a sentiment on which *al-Qa'ida* capitalised.

The relevance of these principles to modern Muslim regimes is immediately obvious, for they all claim some kind of legitimisation through religion, even if they are basically repressive and corrupt. Practically none of them could live up to such standards – or, indeed, would want to. Even those which claim strict adherence to Islamic law in their legal codes and practices, such as Saudi Arabia, fail the test in terms of the personal behaviour of their rulers. Even worse, any evidence of involvement with Western powers is clearly a breach of these strict conditions so that *jihad* against them becomes an obligation incumbent, in the extremist *salafi* vision, on every Muslim and those who do not agree are *kuffar*, apostates.

For the *salafi* extremists, such as those involved in al-Qa'ida and similar networks elsewhere, the circle is now complete. A defensive *jihad* against Western influence and intrusion is a moral duty[28]. An inner-directed *jihad* against corrupt Muslim governments that connive with Western influence is an imperative to protect the Muslim world and Muslims themselves must be purged of their own apostasy if they do not accept these obligations, for unless they do, the Muslim world itself will be in sin – and, of course the traditional sentence for apostasy is death in *shar'ia* law[29]. This is, in essence, the ideological imperative for the Islamic extremists who make up movements like al-Qa'ida and its associates.

A Network of Networks

There remains the question of how these ideas came to express themselves in the form that they take today, primarily as a confrontation and a challenge to the West, particularly the United States, given its pre-eminence in the crises over Palestine, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, but also its allies as well – including government it considers corrupt in the Middle East and elsewhere that has abandoned, in *al-Qa'ida's* eyes, the true Islamic path. Here the historical role of the events in Afghanistan have proved to be crucial, for it was here that the contemporary ideology of the organisation was forged and it was there that the organisation itself began[30].

Al-Qa'ida and Afghanistan

28. It is important to note that the concept of *jihad* is essentially defensive. In other words, once the *umma* is made safe, it should then end, apart from pre-emptive attacks to prevent the outside world from preparing further attack against it. As Usama bin Ladin once said in a recorded interview "You shall never know peace until we know peace." In other words, "Leave us alone and we shall leave you alone". This idea is repeated in his recent offer of a truce to Europe (see footnote [19]).

29. The Qur'an makes it repeatedly absolutely clear that apostasy is a deadly sin for any Muslim, although the consequences may be avoided only be recantation. The only circumstance in which apparent apostasy is tolerated is if it is the result of coercion – the assumption being that anybody so treated will spontaneously return to proper Muslim observance once the coercion is removed (sura XVI, verse 10; sura II, verse 25). Similarly, those who seek to tempt Muslims into apostasy through conversion are considered as being as guilty as the apostate and both would be punished in a similar manner under *shari'a* law. There is no formal punishment laid down for apostasy in the Qur'an. However, tradition decrees that a male apostate shall be executed – after a three-day delay, according to some traditions, to allow sufficient time for

Al-Qa'ida, then, was a direct consequence of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent American reaction. American and Western policy became predicated on an indirect response, itself the product of Saudi reactions to the invasion. The Saudi government, with American encouragement, began a policy of supporting the religious Afghani factions opposed to the Soviet presence with money, weapons and manpower. It also encouraged private individuals and organisations to support this new *jihad*. The manpower was recruited from the Middle East – and here the *salafis* played a key role – and, to a lesser extent, from Muslim minority communities in Europe and elsewhere by an organisation created for that purpose, *al-Maktab al-Khidmat* (the Recruiting Office). This was organised by Abdallah Azzam, who was already in Pakistan, leading the *Islamic Coordination Council* in Peshawar.

Shortly after the conflict started, he was joined by a Saudi national, a scion of one of the richest families in the Kingdom, the Bin Ladin family which originates from Yemen. Usama Bin Ladin was actually recruited for his new role by the then director of national intelligence, Prince Faisal bin Turki. In 1984, the CIA provided additional funding and weaponry, as well as logistical and training support to these groups and in 1988, as the struggle wound down, Usama Bin Ladin created a support organisation, *al-Qa'ida* (the Base), which was to provide a means of contact amongst the thousands of non-Afghani Muslims – mainly Arab – who had passed through his organisation. By this time, Abdullah Azzam had been killed in a car accident, although some sources claim that his death was no accident and was related to tensions within the leadership of the organisation.

Between 1991 and 1994, most of the foreign nationals involved in the Afghani struggle were forced to leave Pakistan, where they were based, along with many staff from Muslim humanitarian organisations that had been providing essential relief work in the refugee camps in Pakistan. The Pakistani decision to force them out was apparently taken at American insistence – in retrospect an extremely unwise move.

This scattering of a highly trained and radicalised military community made the role of *al-Qa'ida* – although Usama bin Ladin himself returned to Saudi Arabia at the start of the 1990s – even more important for it now became the only means by which its members could remain in touch. At this time, however, this is essentially all it was, although Ramzi Yusef was already beginning his own terror campaign[31] but it was about to change into something far more dangerous.

Up to 1996, Usama Bin Ladin had been in the forefront of protest in Saudi Arabia about the failings of the government there and been involved in such initiatives as the *Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights* (CDLR) and the *Arab Reform Committee* (ARC), both resolutely non-violent organisations that enjoyed support from within the core institutions of Saudi society, even though they were condemned by government[32]. Bin Ladin himself was forced out of Saudi Arabia in 1991 and his citizenship was revoked in 1994 because of his outspokenness on these issues and the related issue of the permanent American presence in Saudi Arabia. It is said that his expulsion occurred in response to official Saudi realisation that he could mobilise up to 35,000 men, when he offered them as shock troops against the Iraqi presence in Kuwait![33] In 1996, however, Usama bin Ladin returned to Afghanistan, after he had been forced out of Sudan, again as the result of American pressure because of suspicions over his involvement in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center and in the 1995 attack on the al-Khobar military housing complex in Saudi Arabia itself.

In short, Uslama bin Ladin was personally being radicalised and contemplating the use of the al-Qa'ida organisation as a means of realising the objectives of confronting corruption in the Middle East and countering the role of the United States there. By the mid-1990s, the al-Qa'ida leadership was also to alter significantly and articulate a new series of shared objectives. The leadership change was, in essence, the introduction into it of Egyptian militants who had been marginalized during the 1992-1997 Islamist campaign there, particularly the leaderships of the *Gamiyat Islamiyya* and *Jihad Islami* who were forced out of Egypt in 1995 and 1996.

Its objectives were also defined by these changes for its analysis of the crisis in the Middle East targeted Middle East regimes it considered to be corrupt and those responsible for maintaining them in power – the United States. There was also a nod towards Saudi sensibilities, so that the issue of a permanent American presence in Saudi Arabia in the wake of the war against Iraq in 1990-91, was also high on the list of its grievances. Interestingly enough, at this time, the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not figure on this agenda explicitly, thus distinguishing the new movement from its Middle Eastern predecessors, although it had become evident in the wake of the Afghani war that new means of communication meant that there was a growing range and ease of contact amongst radical groups throughout the region.

However, the nationally-based movements, such as *Hizbullah* in the Lebanon, *Hamas* in the Occupied Territories or the Algerian movements, such as the *Groupes Islamiques Armés* or the *Armée Islamique du Salut* continued to address specifically domestic agendas and, where spill-over into Europe occurred, it was still primarily connected with these domestic events. This was particularly the case with Algeria, where the bombings on the Paris transport system and in post offices in 1995 and 1996 reflected the influence of the Algerian situation amongst migrant communities derived originally form North Africa and concerned about North African issues. The same was true of the short-lived terrorist campaign in Libya in 1996-97.

This was even true of the Egyptian terrorist crisis which went back to the signing of the peace treaty with Israel and President Sadat's subsequent assassination. The tensions there had erupted into violence for powerful domestic reasons in 1992 and these continued to predominate until the movements were effectively defeated in 1997, without there being any significant spill-over effects into Europe or America. However, the groups in Egypt had developed a much more sophisticated political analysis of the Middle Eastern situation in which the United States was seen to have played a crucial role in supporting and abetting regimes they considered corrupt, partly because of the significant Egyptian leadership role in recruiting for Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Towards the end of the 1990s, however, there is a clear link between the influence of these Egyptian groups on the *al-Qa'ida* leadership and the growing radicalisation

Global Terrorism

recantation. A female apostate is beaten every three days until she recants. In Iran, religious orthodoxy argues that an "innate" apostate (*murtad*) – a Muslim who has converted to another religion – should be executed whilst a "national" apostate (*murtad melli*) – a person who converted to Islam and then relapsed back to his or her original religion – should be given three days to recant before execution. Jurisprudence sanctions further measures as well – loss of all civil rights, automatic annulment of marriage, burial outside Muslim cemeteries. At the same time, all property rights are annulled, so that the state takes over control of property in lieu of the original apostatising owner against an eventual recantation, but takes over title as well upon the apostate's death. Sheriff F. (1985), A guide to the contents of the Qumran, Ithaca Press (London); 84, 95.

30. There are many studies of *al-Qa'ida* available now although most of them are sensationalist and partial. Perhaps the best study is Gunaratna R (2002), *Inside al-Qaeda: global network of terror*, Hurst (London), although it is long on detail and short on interpretation. The link with the Taliban is very well described in Rasid A. (2000), *Taliban: militant Islam, oil and the new Great Game in Central Asia*, Yale University Press (New Haven) and in Malley W. (ed)(1998), *Fundamentalism reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, Hurst (London).

31. It has never been definitively established whether he was working for an organisation or was operating on his own behalf, with, perhaps, powerful financial backers. American sources are convinced that, even at this early date, the al-Qa'ida organisation was an active terrorist group, although there has never been independent confirmation of this (*El Hayat* 11.09.2003).

32. The British Secret Intelligence Service, in 1996, was unable to confirm – as was very widely believed at the time – that Bin Ladin actually financed the CDLR (confidential communication). Bin Ladin himself had, nonetheless, been banned from entering Britain by the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard, on the grounds that his presence would not "be conducive to the public good".

33. This was apparently originally revealed by Prince Faisal bin Turki, the former Saudi intelligence director (confidential source).

of the group itself, with its objectives widening from the question of American influence in Saudi Arabia towards identifying America itself as the primary target and thus becoming truly international in its scope and objectives. Thus, in 1995 its direct involvement in the *Gam'iyat Islamiyya* attempt to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa emerged – the first direct evidence of an *al-Qa'ida* action. This was followed by *al-Qa'ida* endorsement of the Riyadh and al-Khobar bombings in 1995 and 1996, although its direct involvement has always been unproven, and the first *fatwa*, attacking the United States was issued in August of that year.

Two years later came the "Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders"[34] in which the movement joined forces with five other groups, two of them the Egyptian members of the leadership and the others Asian. The first document clearly envisaged direct threat against Americans – not others – and the second clearly identified new *al-Qa'ida* targets. These were to be the United States and their allies (clearly Israel), until "the Aqsa mosque and the Haram mosque are freed from their grip" – in other words, until Jerusalem and Mecca are liberated from an American presence.

The subsequent attacks on American embassies in East Africa (August 1998) and the USS Cole in Aden harbour (September 2000) demonstrated that the *al-Q 'ida* movement had now become global in its scope, was directed against the United States and also denounced it considered corrupt, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Yet, even here, the Egyptian influence continued to make itself felt, for the attacks on the embassies were preceded by an American-inspired repatriation of a leading Egyptian Islamist who had been condemned to death in Egypt from Albania, together with three supporters. Some time after the repatriation had taken place, the *Gamiyat Islamiyya* issued a warning that it would retaliate and shortly afterwards the East African embassy bombings took place. Although it has never been officially stated, some intelligence specialists consider that there was a causal link between the events in Albania and in East Africa – if not in determining the target, for such an operation takes considerable planning, then in terms of timing.

In other words, the addition of the leaderships of the Egyptian groups to al-Qa'ida gave it a professionalism in organisation and operation that it had not had before. It was this factor, more than any other, that transformed it from being a *jihadist* organisation, dedicated to the collective struggle against alien influences in the Middle East and the protection of the Islamic *umma*, into an organisation that was prepared to consider the manipulation of terror as its major technique for its defensive struggle against its chosen targets of tyranny and corruption inside the Islamic world and Western intervention. Indeed, it has developed its own praxis of pre-emption, for its operations have become increasingly aggressive in recent years, as well as being global in scope.

Globalism and Localism

Yet, this global agenda could not easily be handled by a single organisation, for it would have become so complex that it would have been easily dismantled. This is in part what occurred in Afghanistan, where the movement in its *jihadist* mode had become enmeshed in the Taliban administration and was therefore relatively easily broken up. Instead al-Qa'ida seems to operate in a much more decentralised fashion, in which the core takes strategic decisions, leaving the actual execution to quite separate groups with which it is in contact because of its previous role as a recruiting centre for the Afghani war in the 1980s and as a information centre in the early 1990s. These local groups may well be *salafi-jihadi* in inspiration – the movement is now so widely spread throughout the Muslim world and provides a thick intellectual texture against which such movements can find their ideological and doctrinal justification – but they also have local agendas which are usually their main concern.

In short, outside the nomadic *jihad* described by Wiktorowiczq, there are also a series of groups concerned with the social and political struggle within national borders and, most importantly, within immigrant communities, especially in Europe. They may well be linked to al-Qa'ida, if only by the common thread of the experience of the Afghani war and the subsequent training offered by al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan to putative *mujahidin* (those who fight *jihad*). They may also be prepared to take part in operations either suggested by the core movement or that might fit within its overall strategy, as appears to have happened recently in Saudi Arabia and Morocco. But they also have domestic agendas to deal with as well. They form a kind of *dispersed jihad*, as a third stage in the evolution of the *salafi-jihadi* threat – a series of disparate, autonomous

movements with access to a shared ideology in a world of global communications access. They no longer need a head, so that the threat the West faces is now far more complex as clear, traceable links no longer exist, only shared objectives, means and doctrines.

Migration and *Jihad*

The final piece in this increasingly complex jigsaw of groups and movements also reflects *al-Qa'ida's* nature as a network of networks and is directly relevant to the events of September 11, 2001. This is that the groups that have been most involved in the actual commission of actions such as the attacks in the United States have been recruited especially for the specific task involved. Thus the September 11 hijackers were identified and recruited in Hamburg, Ahmad Rezzam, the unsuccessful Los Angeles airport bomber, was recruited in Montreal and Robert Reid and Zacarias Moustafaoui – the first the "shoe bomber" and the second the "twentieth hijacker" for September 11, were recruited in Britain. They were, in short, part of the massive wave of post-war migration into Europe and their involvement was a statement about alienation in the European context as much as it was a statement about commitment to *salafi* ideals.

In any case, the involvement of migrant communities in terrorism long predates *al-Qa'ida*, as the example of France shows. It has been the target of concerted terrorist actions carried out by migrants in both the 1980s and the 1990s. In the 1980s, the actions were connected with the Middle East and France's perceived role there, particularly in Lebanon, Iraq and Iran. There were a series of attacks on the French transport network in 1985 and 1986, mainly carried out by sympathisers with two groups of Lebanese militants, some of whom had been imprisoned in France. Two prisoners, in particular, were important, Georges Abdullah, a Marxist, and Anis Naccache, a Shi'a activist with links to Iran.

What was interesting was that the activists concerned were largely North African residents of France and Belgium, some of whom had been sympathisers with the Iranian revolution. In large measure, these incidents also revealed another consideration that is extremely important today. North African residents of France were involved, not because of their global concerns but because of their sense of alienation within France itself. It is a phenomenon now widely recognised in France as the "banlieusard" (suburbanite) problem because of the ghetto-like suburbs occupied by North African migrants and French citizens of North African origin around most major French cities.

This pattern was to be repeated in the 1990s, only then the catalyst through which this sense of alienation was voiced was the crisis in Algeria itself. All clandestine Algerian Islamist groups involved in confrontation with the Algerian government have developed logistic networks in Europe, mainly in France, based on migrant communities and on French nationals of Algerian and wider North African origin. There was also a spate of terrorism in the mid-1990s, based, with one exception, on the domestic French migrant community, typified by the Chasse-sur-Rhone and Chalabi networks which were implicated in the bombings on the Paris underground system. The profound alienation was revealed by a famous and very lengthy interview published by the highly-respected French daily newspaper, *Le Monde*, in mid-1995 with Khalid Kelkal, a leading member of the Chasse-sur-Rhone group who was killed shortly afterwards by French police in a notorious incident which came close to extra-judicial execution. Before this, however, there had been a series of explosions on the RER system in Paris and the spate of terrorism came to an end after a shoot-out in Lille. The one incident that did not involve French citizens of North African migrants was the attempt to crash an airliner on Paris in December 1994 mentioned above.

There is also no doubt that the support and logistics groups proliferated more widely through Europe. This was certainly the case in Britain, where there was considerable support for the GIA and where, according to the French government, much of the command structures for the terrorist attacks were located. Indeed, extradition proceedings have been taking place for the past five years over these cases. However, at no time has it been suggested that there were similar incidents or plans directed against Britain. Indeed, the British authorities have been consistently accused of providing a haven for those responsible for terrorist attacks. There is no evidence, apart from assertion, that the *modus operandi* of these groups has changed since September 11, 2001, in Britain or elsewhere in Europe, so that migrant involvement in the activities of *al-Qa'ida* is a question of opportunism building on longstanding social and political alienation arising from the migration experience itself, even if there have

been direct links to organisations such as *al-Qa'ida* as well.

If, indeed, migrants are so easily persuaded into terrorism, then the probable explanation has far more to do the problems of handling the implications of the transformation of Europe into a complex heterogeneous society than it does about the arcane issue of protecting the Islamic *umma*, even though this has become the rhetoric in which the problems of failed integration are voiced. In other words, it is highly questionable if the logic of the "War on Terror" has much to say about solving what is essentially a European problem but which links back into the core problems of the Middle Eastern region. Indeed, it is highly questionable if that logic has much to offer in the Middle East either, for it only relates to the symptoms of the problem, not to the cause.

The Outcome

Terrorism linked to the al-Qa'ida movement is a statement about quite specific problems in the Middle Eastern region. In part, these relate to the developmental failure there, for which Arab governments are at least as culpable as their Western counterparts[35]. In part, however, they are the consequence of decades of arrogance and neglect of the key issues in the region, of governance, corruption and of Israeli intransigence. They also reflect a massive insensitivity to the values and specificities of Muslim society and an unawareness of historical memory. Given this indifference, is the *al-Qa'ida* phenomenon so surprising and will the muscularities implied by the "war on terror" eliminate it?

Far better would be an approach that constructively engaged the regional problems in which the West is implicated, alongside the rejection of violence. This alone might create the climate in which popular attitudes in the Middle Eastern and North African region might no longer sympathise with the wider aims of the *salafi-jihadi* movement and decry the brutality of its more extreme adherents. This would, of course, mean that, alongside the very necessary task of intelligence and control, designed to eliminate a terrorist threat, we should have to take seriously the political issues that lie behind such terrorism and resolve them, no matter how difficult such a task might be[36]. There is nothing very novel about this, except, perhaps the political courage to do it! It would mean taking a new approach to the Palestinian issue; one based on fairness and even-handedness. It would require a recognition of our mistakes in Iraq and a concerted attempt to rectify them. It would also mean an end to the indulgence of corruption and repression in the Middle East and North Africa, for the sake of short-term security of Western interests there.

Europe has a blueprint for precisely such an agenda, if only it can overcome its reticence to act autonomously from the US, in the enhanced Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. But for it to succeed, the European Union would have to be far more forceful that it is at present in addressing the problems of the region and supporting the innate tolerance of the culture of the Islamic world. For that, in the end, is the greatest weakness of *al-Qa'ida* and the hydra-headed movements that share its ideals – its intolerance and victimisation of those who do not necessarily actively agree with its objective or its methods. Despite its obsessive concern about legal justification, enshrined in its attention to *fatwas* to justify its actions, the movement fits squarely within the category of totalitarian systems as defined by Hannah Arendt[37] – charismatic leadership of a repressive regime based on a holistic ideology but operating with arbitrary power. Her arguments were formulated in the context of European Fascism but they apply equally well to repressive regimes elsewhere, whether in charge of countries, such as the Taliban, or arrogating to themselves the supposedly moral imperatives of global terrorism. It is the authoritarian and arbitrary nature of *al-Qa'ida* that is its real weakness and the measure of the degree to which it has betrayed its Islamic origins. Yet no move against it will succeed until the tactical and strategic implications of this are understood.

35. See the United Nations Development Programme's report on Arab human development, published last year. This describes in detail Arab failure to handle development successfully, with the consequence that the populations of the region are becoming absolutely poorer, year-by-year. It was drawn up by Arab economists and is based on a plethora of data. However, it says nothing of the damage wrought by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, or indeed of the role played by the European Union.
36. See Joffé E.G.H. (2000) *International implications of domestic security*, EuroMeSCo Paper 9, IEEI (Lisbon)
37. See Hannah Arendt (1951), *The origins of totalitarianism*, Harvest Books (New York).