THE FINAL ACT: IDEOLOGIES OF CATASTROPHIC TERROR

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Within the past three years, terrorist attacks have claimed thousands of lives in London, Bali, Jakarta, Bombay, Istanbul, Ankara, Amman, Riyadh, Sharm-el-Sheikh, and of course, Baghdad, Kabul, and many other cities and villages throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, additional terror plots of significance have been disrupted in Australia, Denmark, Canada, England, Germany, Pakistan, and the U.S., among others. Clearly the international community is facing a catastrophic terrorist threat of historic proportions, and countering this threat requires an understanding of both the intentions and capabilities of groups and individuals to carry out violent acts. Our nation's counterterrorism strategy is currently focused on constricting the capabilities of terrorists (through military action and disrupting their financial and logistics networks, all of which requires significant intelligence) and destroying their will to attack us. This is particularly the case when addressing the threat of terrorists who seek to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction (WMD). However, there is much more we can do to understand and counter the ideological motivations behind the threat of catastrophic terrorism.

This essay seeks to contribute toward that objective. The discussion begins by describing a spectrum of ideologies, and identifies a threshold of catastrophic terrorism which divides those groups willing to cause mass casualties and destruction (including, but not exclusively with WMD) from those groups who are not. The essay then describes the ideology embraced by al Qaida and affiliated terror groups, and examines why this ideology has found some resonance in the broader Muslim world. Finally, the discussion explores what all this means regarding the global threat of WMD terrorism, and concludes with some initial thoughts on counterterrorism policy and strategy. A significantly expanded version of this essay will be published by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point early next year.

The Spectrum of Ideologies

Terrorism can be considered an ideologically-driven phenomenon, a type of violence that transcends criminal or other motivations. Individuals and groups often resort to the use of terrorism because they have a vision of the future that they long for, and which they do not believe will materialize without the use of violence. This vision of the future is articulated through an ideology, a set of ideas and values meant to inspire individual action and rationalize the use of violence in pursuit of this envisioned future. An ideology can be intellectually and emotionally appealing to many individuals, particularly those who seek meaning in their lives. Religious ideologies add a spiritual dimension to this appeal, and can thus be a more powerful motivator for action by justifying an individual's need to conduct violent acts in order to save oneself, one's family or the world, while achieving God's will.

Our understanding of the potential threat of a terrorist groups is informed by recognizing their vision of the future, as well as the strategy through which they hope to achieve that vision. It is equally necessary to understand the broad spectrum of ideologies in order to develop expectations with regard to a specific group's use of violence in pursuit of their espoused future vision (see Figure 1). At one end of this spectrum are groups that desire dramatic changes, but do not see the necessity of violent means to bring about those changes. Between the two extreme

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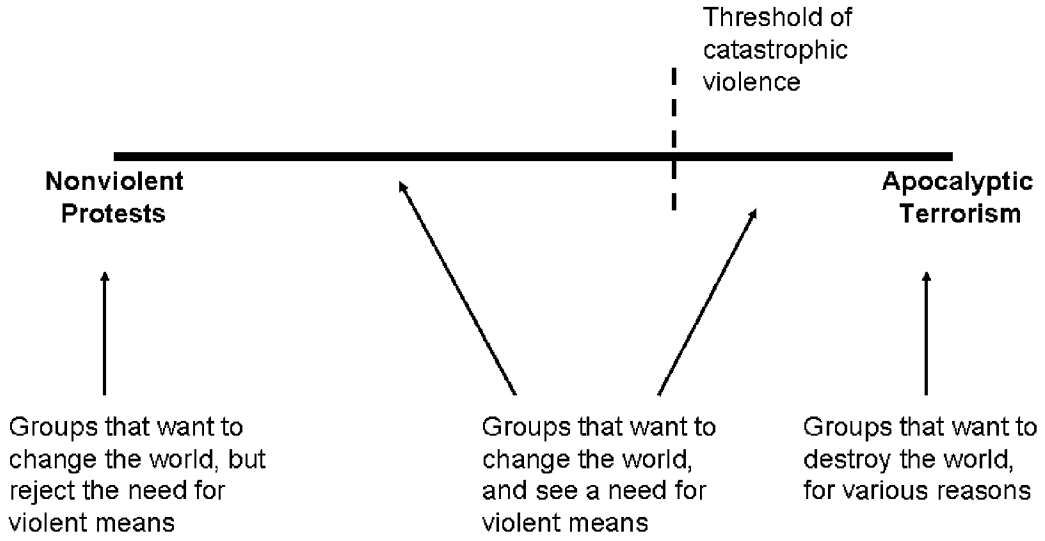
ends of the spectrum are a variety of groups willing to use some level of violence in pursuit of their objectives, ranging from a desire for religious governance (e.g., Islamic militants seeking to establish a caliphate, where sharia law reigns supreme) to Maoist communism (e.g., insurgencies in Peru and Nepal) to Armageddon (e.g., Aum Shinrikyo). A vision of the future might include retribution for past injustices, changes in the policy directions of a local regime (or even a superpower), a world with greater socio-economic equality, or even a world without certain types of people in it. Some may pursue a vision of a better world for their children; others may pursue a vision of salvation in the afterlife. A vision can be shared by many individuals and groups, but at different extremes, with some adopting a militant, even violent approach to the pursuit of their vision, while others are more passive sympathizers or financial supporters.

Figure 1: Spectrum of Ideologies



At the opposite end of the spectrum from the nonviolent protestors are individuals and groups whose ideologies articulate a desire for the end of the world, or at least the end of all mankind. Examples include extreme environmentalist cults like the Church of Euthanasia and the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement (both of whom call for the elimination of the human race in order to save the planet), and apocalyptic (doomsday or final judgment) cults. Among the latter category, the most prominent in recent years has been the Aum Shinrikyo, whose leader Shoko Asahara came to believe that a catastrophic world war was imminent, and that only his followers would survive. However, it is important to note that beyond small, extremist cults, there is actually a healthy tradition of worrying about the end of history within all of the world's major religions. In the Bible, the Book of Revelations (also known as the Apocalypse of John) describes the eventual Battle of Armageddon between the forces of good and evil, leading to judgment day. The Qur'an does not have a Book of Revelations equivalent to provide a unified narrative about the end of the world, but there are many Muslims (particularly among the Shi'i tradition) who openly yearn and prepare for the return of the Mahdi, the messianic figure who will bring justice to the world and complete the spread of Islam. Regardless of the underlying monotheistic faith, groups that adhere to an apocalyptic ideology see their mission in two general ways: They either want to accelerate the end of time or take action to ensure that they survive the

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millennium. For example, Aum Shinrikyo wanted to hasten the end of the world (and thus sought nuclear weapons and developed their own chemical and biological weapons programs in pursuit of this objective), while other groups have built compounds (like that of the Branch Davidians new Waco, Texas) in order to survive the apocalypse. Overall, groups which embrace this unique "end of times" form of catastrophic ideology represent a worst-case scenario type of terrorist threat, although to date there have been relatively few groups at this end of the spectrum (and apocalyptic groups have historically had very limited appeal to a broader population).

At a certain point along the spectrum of ideologies, there is a threshold of catastrophic terrorism (based on the amount of death and destruction generated by the true believers of the ideology), a threshold which relatively few groups have crossed. Indeed, a significant majority of terrorist groups have recognized the need to impose constraints on their violence, in order to maintain the popular support necessary for financing their operations and recruiting new members to their ranks. Further, many terrorists throughout history have pursued a vision of the future in which they will someday be in charge of a particular governable space, and this vision may require them to overthrow an existing government but ensure that the space and people they seek to govern are left relatively undamaged. However, if the envisioned governable space is distinctly different from the larger population of a nation-state (like a separate Basque country, a Tamil homeland, a Chechen or Kurdish state, etc.), there are fewer constraints against a catastrophic terror attack against the governing regime and those who support it (e.g., in Madrid, Moscow, or Istanbul).

Among the groups that have already crossed the threshold of catastrophic terrorism (or at least intend to if given the capability and opportunity), most are unconstrained by earthly considerations, and instead see themselves as fulfilling the mandate of a higher power—in essence, the threat they pose is limited solely by the weapons they can acquire. A common thread among these groups is the need for mass destruction and death (indeed, the elimination of all humans, in some cases) in order to bring about a better world envisioned and articulated through some form of catastrophic ideology. However, there are also important differences. Some terrorists who adhere to catastrophic ideologies are seeking the end of the world, while others just want to dominate the world by any means necessary. Members of Al Qaida are included in this latter category.

The Militant Islamic Ideology

The ideology motivating al Qaida and affiliated groups stems from an extremist interpretation of Sunni Islam called Salafism. Within the 1.2 billion-strong Muslim community—people who follow the Qur'an and the example of Muhammad—there are Sunnis (people who follow the example of the Prophet) and Shi`is (people who follow the example of the Prophet and his descendents through his son-in-law Ali).[1] There are a range of secularists and fundamentalists among both Sunnis and Shi`is, including Islamists—people who want Islamic law to be the primary source of law and cultural identity in a state. Among these Islamists are the Salafis, Sunni Muslims who want to establish and govern Islamic states based solely on the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet as understood by the first generations of Muslims close to Muhammad. Finally, a distinct minority of Salafis are called Jihadis—the "holy warriors" and today's most prominent terrorists—among whom al Qaida and other groups seek to recruit and mobilize toward their particular vision of the future.

This unique Salafi-Jihadi interpretation of Islam draws from a number of sources. First, Ibn Tamiyya—a 13th century theologian—argued that Muslim leaders of his time had strayed

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from a literal interpretation of the Qur'an, and called for the eradication of beliefs and customs that were foreign to Islam and a renewed adherence to tawhid (oneness of God). His writings were very influential for Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, an 18th century cleric (and founder of the religious tradition that dominates Saudi Arabia), who argued that if one could not convert an audience to his interpretation of Islam, they could be labeled as infidels and deserved to be killed. In the early 20th century, an Egyptian named Hassan al-Banna (the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood) carried forward the argument that much of the world had fallen away from true Islam, and encouraged Muslims to use violence against the corrupting influences of the West (including occupying military forces and apostate regimes). During this same period, Abu al-Ala Mawdudi—an Indian journalist—gained broad support for his argument that Muslims should not be afraid to use force in their quest to establish a more just society. And finally, another Egyptian named Sayyid Qutb expanded the argument that Islam is the one and only way of ruling mankind that is acceptable to God, and called for the abandonment of all human-created concepts, laws, customs, traditions—even by force, where necessary. He argued that Muslims should resist the influences of Western institutions and traditions that have poisoned mankind and made the world an evil place (*Dar al-Harb*—house of war or chaos).

These and other prominent Muslim figures have contributed significantly to what has become known as the Salafi-Jihadist movement, whose contemporary members are motivated by an ideology that can be summed up as "the world is truly messed up, and only Islam is the answer, therefore we must do all that is necessary to tear down the existing order and replace it with one built on Islam." The Jihadis' vision of the future requires them to overthrow what they consider "apostate" regimes in the Middle East and replace them with governments that rule by Sharia law, but only until the Islamic caliphate can be reestablished to rule over the entire Muslim world. Attacks against Western targets (to include New York City and the Pentagon, London, and Madrid) are necessary because it is through alliances with powerful, industrialized Western nations that these apostate regimes are sustained. Finally, the magnitude of their long-term objective requires the Salafi-Jihadis to mobilize the entire Muslim community and convince them that catastrophic violence is necessary to remove the obstacles to a better (Islamic) future. There is, of course, much more to the ideology than this simplistic overview, as a quick glance through Internet websites and forums will reveal. But a basic element to keep in mind for the purposes of this analysis is that the Jihadi ideology is derived from Salafi ideology, which in turn is just one of many interpretive traditions of Islam.

A team of researchers at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, led by Professor Will McCants, recently produced a comprehensive analysis of the most influential thinkers in the Salafi-Jihadi movement, revealing several important themes about this ideology.[2] For example, they discerned that the Jihadi cause is best served when the conflict with local and foreign governments is portrayed as a conflict between Islam and the West; Islam is under siege and only the Jihadis can lift it. Further, Jihadis argue that violence against other Muslims, their governments, and resources is 1) necessary, 2) religiously sanctioned, and 3) really the fault of the West, Israel, and apostate regimes. Jihadis are certain of the absolute righteousness of their cause, and want unity of thought. They reject pluralism—the idea that no one has a monopoly on truth—and the political system that fosters it, democracy. And, as Qutb and other early thinkers in the movement have argued, Jihad is the only source of internal empowerment and reform in a state rule by an apostate regime. These and other tenets of the Salafi-Jihadi ideology have found resonance in the broader Muslim world for a variety of reasons.

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Enablers of Ideological Resonance

An ideology does not have to be based on fact to be believed; it merely needs to be communicated effectively and persuasively within a favorable cultural, socio-economic, and political environment which can enable ideological resonance. It is the way in which people react to their environment that enables acts of violence. For example, during the 1930s, a set of prejudices (like anti-Semitism) combined with socio-economic and political problems throughout Europe enabled a broad acceptance (particularly among Germans) of the need for catastrophic violence, as articulated by the Nazi ideology. Similarly, counterterrorism analysts have described various pre-existing conditions which could enable a potentially violent ideology (including ethno-nationalist separatism, communist insurgency, or apocalyptic visions) to resonate among a particular population. These can be loosely categorized into two types—perceptive enablers, and environmental enablers—and help illustrate why the Salafi-Jihadi ideology has found some resonance in the modern Muslim world.

Perceptive Enablers of Salafi-Jihadi Ideology

On both a global and local level, religious beliefs can serve as a powerful enabler of a terrorist group's ideological resonance, in part by providing an individual with a sense of purpose in life. As British terror expert JP Larsson has observed, religious ideologies are often theologically supremacist—meaning that all believers assume superiority over non-believers, who are not privy to the truth of the religion.[3] Second, most are exclusivist—believers are a chosen people, or their territory is a holy land. Third, many are absolutist; in other words, it is not possible to be a half-hearted believer, and you are either totally within the system, or totally without it. Further, only the true believers are guaranteed salvation and victory, whereas the enemies and the unbelievers—as well as those who have taken no stance whatsoever—are condemned to some sort of eternal punishment or damnation, as well as death. Overall, religious ideologies help foster polarizing values in terms of right and wrong, good and evil, light and dark—values which can be co-opted by terrorist organizations to convert a "seeker" into a lethal killer.

The dimension of ideological absolutism (us against the world) is particularly salient for understanding the appeal to some individuals of the Salafi-Jihadi ideology. If one believes that the world around them is entirely corrupt and evil, it is not difficult to convince them to lash out at the perceived source of this evil—in this case, apostate regimes and the West. In the Muslim world today, there is a longing for retribution against others for perceived injustices, and a desire to address a power imbalance. Jihadis can tap into these sentiments by offering a promise to empower the disenfranchised, and to right the global wrong. Further, Jihadis can also point to various environmental factors which, they argue, support their rationale for violence and terrorism.

Environmental Enablers of Salafi-Jihadi Ideology

Within any given political environment, members of a society have expectations, demands, aspirations and grievances. The degree to which there are opportunities and power to address these without the use of violence is a major determinant of terrorist group formation. Local chaos (for example, in a weak or failing state) can also create an opportunity for an ideology of catastrophic terrorism to resonate. Unemployment, significant ethnic fissures and animosities, socio-demographic pressures (for example, the rising youth bulge in Arab world), and political regimes that are viewed as overly repressive, authoritarian, corrupt and incompetent all contribute to an environment in which a violent ideology can appeal to a broad audience. Among

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Arab Muslims in particular, there is a growing sense of crisis and resentment toward their state leaders and Western allies, along with a sense of powerlessness and humiliation that stems from the relative socio-political standing of the Muslim world versus the Western, Judeo-Christian world; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (and current U.S. policy towards this it), along with Israel's repeated defeat of Arab armies; and a fear that a creeping globalization or westernization of cultural values is having a detrimental impact on long-held traditions and belief structures in the Muslim world.

Many of these environmental enablers are certainly found throughout the Middle East, but are also seen in other parts of the world as well. In Southeast Asia, for example, a host of social and economic inequalities have contributed to the rise of Muslim-led secessionist movements since the 1970s, particularly among the Muslim minorities of the southern Philippines and southern Thailand. In Europe, Muslim communities are filled with comparatively poor, disenfranchised permanent residents, with no hope of naturalization for themselves or their children (as opposed to, say, the more integrated Muslim experience in the United States). In major cities like Copenhagen, London and Paris, large numbers of Muslims live in so-called "ethnic enclaves," neighborhoods with impoverished schools, limited transportation and few employment opportunities. These and other environmental factors could be perceived as enablers of ideological resonance, and are cause for concern when analyzing the global spread of the Salafi-Jihadi ideology.

Implications for the Threat of WMD

In October 2006, an audio statement was released by Abu Hamza al-Muhajir—the leader of al Qaida in Iraq—calling for nuclear scientists to join his mujahideen group, emphasizing that "the battlefield will accommodate your scientific aspirations." That same month, Dhiren Barot—a British jihadist and convert to Islam—pled guilty in a London courtroom to a series of terrorist plots in the UK and U.S. that were, according to authorities, "designed to kill as many innocent people as possible." In one plot, Barot intended to detonate a radiological dispersion device (also known as a "dirty bomb") in London. These and other recent examples are pointed to as evidence of the global Salafi-Jihadist movement's growing interest in weapons of mass destruction. Contemporary members of this movement rationalize the need for these weapons as part of a power/capability/force multiplier calculation within the context of the larger socio-political vision being pursued.

Initially, in the late 1990s, al Qaida sought to acquire WMD in order to defend their safe haven in Afghanistan. Today, research indicates that al Qaida wishes to acquire a WMD to use as a first strike weapon against the United States and its allies. Their calculus for WMD acquisition is rational, not apocalyptic. They believe that WMD will advance their strategic objective of exhausting the United States economically and militarily by forcing the U.S. to expend massive amounts of money on protecting our critical infrastructure, borders and ports of entry, and on military deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. They are convinced that acquiring WMD will allow them to achieve military and strategic parity with the West, bestow credibility on the mujahideen, exaggerate the movement's power and capability, and frighten the enemies of Islam.

They also rationalize the acquisition and use of WMD as necessary to avenge Western "killing of Muslims" by killing large number of western civilians. In 2003, Al Qaida received some modicum of religious sanction for the use of WMD against the enemies of Islam by Saudi cleric Nassir bin Hamad al-Fahd, who issued an important and detailed fatwa on the

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permissibility of WMD in jihad. He stated that since America has destroyed countless lands and killed millions of Muslims, it would obviously be permitted to respond in kind. Similarly, al Qaida spokesman Suleiman Abu Gheith stated in 2002 that "we have the right to kill 4 million Americans, 2 million of them children . . . and cripple them in the hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, it is our obligation to fight them with chemical and biological weapons, to afflict them with the fatal woes that have afflicted Muslims because of their chemical and biological weapons." And al Qaida member Abu Muhammad al-Ablaj noted that a chemical, biological, or nuclear weapon "must be used at a time that makes the crusader enemy beg on his knee that he does not want more strikes."

The apocalyptic "end of the world" doctrine of a cult like Aum Shinrikyo is inconsistent with Salafi-Jihadi ideology. The Qur'an is filled with predictions about the end of the world, but most Muslims (including many Jihadis) believe that only God decides when this will take place, and thus it is not up to humans to bring about such an event. However, this does not suggest that Jihadis are averse to catastrophic terrorism—indeed, they do believe that mass killing is permitted in defense of Islam as long as the enemy persists. In his 2003 fatwa, al-Fahd argued that if mass killing is the only way to harm the enemy and bring it to it's knees, then so be it. Further, he claims that mass killing of Muslims is also justified if it is necessary to harm the enemy.

In an open letter to the State Department released in December 2004, senior al Qaida strategist Abu Musab Al-Suri described the importance of using WMD against the United States as the only means to fight it from a point of equality. He even criticized Osama bin Laden for not using WMD in the September 11 attacks: "If I were consulted in the case of that operation I would advise the use of planes in flights from outside the U.S. that would carry WMD." According to al Suri, "if those engaged in jihad establish that the evil of the infidels can be repelled only by attacking them with weapons of mass destruction, they may be used even if they annihilate all the infidels." Like Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Suri has also argued that the U.S. has declared a crusade against Muslims, and openly seeks to colonize the Middle East. (Of course, an ideology can be compelling to its target audience even if wholly untrue.) Finally, he states that "the defeat of the United States and the end of its ambitions of hegemony over the world is a matter of life and death for Muslims. It is a favor for the entire human race. We cannot imagine that the United States, with its mighty military and economic power, will be defeated and destroyed unless one of the following takes place:

- God Almighty sends a natural disaster and annihilates the United States. He destroys it with meteorites, earthquakes, volcanoes, or floods.
- Muslims will be able to defeat the United States by means of resistance and lengthy guerrilla warfare.
- The last option is to destroy the United States by means of decisive strategic operations with weapons of mass destruction including nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons if mujahideen are able to obtain them in cooperation with those who possess them, purchase them, or manufacture and use primitive atomic bombs or the so-called dirty bombs."

These and other statements of al Qaida leaders illustrate their rationale for acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction in order to destroy (or at least defeat) the West and save Islam. When their ideology resonates among some parts of the Muslim world, the movement is able to mobilize support which fuels an expanding trajectory of capabilities. From this perspective, it is perhaps only a matter of time before a catastrophic attack with a chemical or

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radiological (or, slightly less probable, biological or nuclear) weapons is carried out by one or more followers of this ideology. Their use of a WMD against the perceived enemies of Islam would certainly have a dramatic psychological impact on the West as well as the Muslim world, in addition to the potential for catastrophic loss of life and disruption of the global economy. Countering this threat is clearly a priority for the U.S. and our allies.

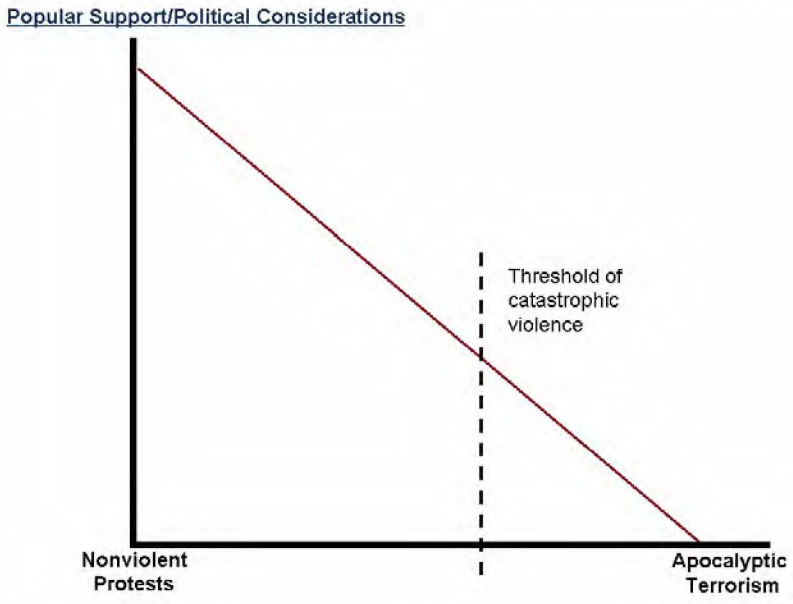
Implications for Counterterrorism Policy and Strategy

An expanded version of this essay, which includes an analysis of al Qaida's targeting strategies, weapons preferences, technical and strategic constraints, and other topics will be published by the Combating Terrorism Center early next year. The following are merely some cursory thoughts on counterterrorism policies and strategies that result from this analysis of catastrophic ideologies, offered to stimulate discussion and debate at this Fund for Peace summit on threat convergence.

To begin with, while our national security strategies have historically focused on constraining an enemy's operational and technical capabilities to cause us harm, we must also counter the motivating ideologies of catastrophic terrorism. Combating terrorism that is driven by an extreme religious or apocalyptic vision requires sophisticated skills in public diplomacy and strategic communication, in order to influence the communities which might find these kinds of vision appealing. Furthermore, the communication of compelling ideas and visions to various audiences around the world in the hopes of impacting their behavior—often called strategic influence, "winning hearts and minds," or "winning the war of ideas"—must involve credible voices from within the target audience.

Catastrophic terrorism is inherently indiscriminate, which accounts for the relatively less popular appeal of the most violent ideologies on the spectrum described earlier. Even among the most disenfranchised populations, small-scale violence in pursuit of a better future is seen as more acceptable than indiscriminate death and destruction. As Figure 2 illustrates, there is an inverse relationship between the level of violence promoted by an ideology and its potential for popular support.

Figure 2: Popular Appeal vs. Level of Violence Encouraged by Ideology



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In the case of the Salafi-Jihadi ideology, our counterterrorism strategy can capitalize on this inverse relationship by arguing convincingly that while Jihadis claim to be saving Islam, they are hurting their own people and national resources and tarnishing the image of Islam among non-Muslims. There are contradictions inherent in the Salafi-Jihadi arguments, and the movement may very well fall apart someday under the weight of its own ideological contradictions. We should seek to accelerate that process.

At the core of al Qaida's ideology is the belief in the transformative power of action, jihad-style, at both an individual and global level. In the eyes of the global jihadist, violent action is necessary (and required of all Muslims) in order to prevent the West from destroying Islam. Ultimately, the goal of the global jihad movement is to establish a worldwide Islamic order, and to achieve this objective jihadis must remove obstacles in their way—like the United States and the regimes it helps sustain—as well as convince Muslims around the world that 1) Islam is indeed under attack by the West, and 2) the new Islamic order they envision would be a better alternative than the present, and is worth fighting and dying for. However, Jihadis have lost credibility among mainstream Muslims by attacking women, children, the elderly. Muslims have been prominent among the casualties of Jihadi catastrophic violence, and thus we should emphasize that when innocent Muslims are killed, they are robbed of their chance to conduct their own personal and spiritual jihad as called for in the Qu'ran. Jihadis also lose support by creating political and social chaos in the Muslim world (particularly given the Qu'ran's mandate to avoid *fitna*) and by damaging the sources of a nation's wealth (such as tourism and oil). Our counterterrorism strategy must highlight these and other ideologically divisive issues as part of a broader effort to delegitimize violence against non-combatants.

We must also engage credible Islamic leaders in a global effort to combat attempts to rationalize a WMD attack as God's will. As the recently published CTC report indicates, denouncements of prominent Jihadis by other prominent Jihadis are particularly damaging and demoralizing. We must encourage a broad, comprehensive effort involving Salafi scholars—particularly Saudi clerics, who are best positioned to discredit the movement—to reduce the potential appeal of this ideology in the Muslim world by emphasizing the fact that theirs is an extremely radical interpretation of an otherwise peaceful religion, and followers of this interpretation are more cultish than part of a religious movement. It is particularly important here to highlight how Muslim opponents of the Jihadis use the term "Qutbism" (in recognition that the Jihadis cite Sayyid Qutb more than any other modern author) to describe them, a designation Jihadis hate since it implies that they follow a human and are members of a deviant sect. Adherents of the al Qaida-inspired movement consider "Qutbi" to be a negative label and would much rather be called Jihadi or Salafi. We must emphasize that they are pursuing a totalitarian system of government in which no one is allowed to think for themselves, and anyone who does not share their understanding of Islam will be declared an apostate and executed. In fact, we should argue, the appeal of this vision of the future is so weak that its adherents must use violence in order to compel individuals to accept it.

Finally, we must convince Jihadis and their potential supporters that their methods are an ineffective and counterproductive means for social change. An important component of this argument involves convincing our enemies of the strength of our own national resilience. We must convince them beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are guaranteed not to achieve their objectives, regardless of the frequency or magnitude of their catastrophic terror attacks. Even the types of weapons they use—including WMD—will never result in a world (or even a Middle East) that is ruled only by Islamic law. As long as our political and economic systems and our

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citizens are shown to be adequately resilient to withstand any type of WMD attack, this alone can be a powerful form of deterrence. Denial of the enemy's potential for achieving their objective is a type of strategic constraint that is common in much of the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism research, and should play a more prominent role in combating the threat posed by followers of the Salafi-Jihadi ideology.

Conclusion

In 1998, Nobel Laureate Joshua Lederberg offered a prophetic observation that continues to ring true nearly 10 years later: "There is no technical solution to the problem of biological weapons. It needs an ethical, human and moral solution if it's going to happen at all."[4] Countering the threat of catastrophic terrorism, especially involving WMD, certainly requires us to counter our enemy's technical and operational capabilities, but as Lederberg suggests, we must also do all we can to address the *behavioral* aspects of the threat. In addition to traditional means of deterrence (e.g., affecting the political will of a state or non-state actor to use CBRN weapons in pursuit of their objectives), we must also triumph in the battlespace of the mind, the place where ideologies of catastrophic terrorism can take root and motivate the most destructive behavior known to mankind.

The ideology of the Salafi-Jihadi, which motivates members of al Qaida and other like-minded groups, is built upon the precepts of an existing Salafi tradition within the broader Islamic faith. It is an ideology which resonates in the Muslim world because of several pre-existing perceptions and environmental factors, including a sense of crisis, humiliation, impotence and resentment directed at their local rulers and powerful Western allies. Understanding the enablers of an ideology's resonance is important, as it sensitizes us to conditions or events which might *increase* (or, alternately, *constrain*) the appeal of a movement like the Salafi-Jihadis among a broader population. Further, as other terrorism scholars have noted, the primary danger of a WMD attack stems from religious terrorists who are "unconstrained" either by fear of government action or moral considerations, but rather—like the Salafi-Jihadis—are pursuing what they perceive to be God's will (a world that is ruled by Islam), and believe that the acquisition and use of WMD is necessary to achieve this objective. Countering this and other ideologies of catastrophic terrorism must therefore be a critical component of our national security strategy, and requires a collaborative interagency and multinational effort.

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Notes

[1] This description of Islam and al Qaida's ideology is courtesy of William McCants, a Fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

[2] William McCants and Jarret Brachman. *The Militant Ideology Atlas.* West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006. Online at: http://ctc.usma.edu.

[3] JP Larsson, "The Role of Religious Ideology in Terrorist Recruitment," in *The Making of a Terrorist (Volume 1: Recruitment),* edited by James J.F. Forest (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2005). Also, see James J.F. Forest, "Introduction" in *Teaching Terror: Strategic and Tactical Learning in the Terrorist World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

[4] Quoted in Richard Preston, "Annals of Warfare," *The New Yorker* (9 March, 1998).

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