

## THE WORLD ACCORDING TO USAMA BIN LADEN

---

*Ahmed S. Hashim*

Since 11 September 2001, a day etched in the memories of all Americans, Usama Bin Laden has replaced Saddam Hussein as Public Enemy Number One. This is hardly surprising, given the growing consensus that the Saudi fugitive and his shadowy Al-Qaeda network were responsible for the deadliest terrorist attack on American soil, the single deadliest act of terrorism anywhere to date.

For over a decade Iraq's Saddam Hussein had been perceived as a "new Hitler," a totalitarian thug with nasty weapons and an age-old quest for personal and national aggrandizement. Americans felt they understood his agenda of territorial irredentism and greed. Moreover, while he "talked the talk," he could not "walk the walk." His threat to unleash the "mother of all battles" with his vaunted army turned into the "mother of all embarrassments," the humiliating defeat of that army in February 1991.

Bin Laden, on the other hand, is terrifyingly different for most Americans. Perhaps many were vaguely familiar with him as a result of the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, in 1998, and the attack on the USS *Cole* (DDG 67) in Aden Harbor in 2000, all of which he is suspected of masterminding. Now, as a result of terror attacks by which he "reached

out and touched" the homeland, Bin Laden is known, at least by name, to every American.

The attacks were carried out against the symbols of American economic and military power, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. There are indications that the White House, the symbol of American political power, was also a target. The attacks of 11 September 2001 constituted not only a political, economic,

*Dr. Hashim is associate professor of strategic studies in the Strategic Research Department of the Naval War College. He specializes in Southwest Asian strategic issues, on which he has written extensively. He received his B.A. from Warwick University, in the United Kingdom, and his master's and doctoral degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

and psychological blow but also a cultural shock to Americans. Bin Laden's ideas and visions are unfamiliar to most Americans, who find the idea of a holy war in this day and age bizarre. Questions abound: "Why do they hate us?" "What does he want?" Indeed, Bin Laden's goals remain the least understood aspect of this crisis.

His methods were unfamiliar to most Americans, who have indeed suffered from acts of terror committed against them and their country's interests, but *overseas*. Large-scale terror attacks at home have been rare. The conspiracy to bring down the World Trade Center towers in 1993 and the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City in 1995 were significant acts of terror, but they pale by comparison with the events of 11 September 2001. The latter attacks were diabolically brilliant in conception and execution. The perpetrators did not use "normal" weapons of war—they attacked the United States not with intercontinental ballistic missiles but with commercial aircraft used as guided missiles—and the result was the deaths of thousands of innocent people. If this was not terrorism, what is?

We can eschew a long and ultimately futile discussion of the definition of terrorism. Much ink has been spilled on this topic.<sup>1</sup> The definition used by the U.S. government (and analyzed in detail by Paul Pillar) is sufficient for the purposes of this paper: "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."<sup>2</sup>

The 11 September perpetrators were not ten-foot-tall "supermen" but "ordinary," in some cases well educated, men who planned their mission well but who also made many mistakes prior to the commission of their act.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the hijackers were not armed with the latest in sophisticated gadgetry but with box cutters and knives. Nonetheless, and most important, they were willing to lay down their lives. They were of a breed of men that one Israeli terrorism expert has called "Islamikaze."<sup>4</sup> But they are not a new phenomenon, their kind having appeared in Lebanon in the early 1980s. Suicide attacks have plagued Israel since the mid-1990s and have caused a considerable number of casualties during the cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians that erupted in October 2000.

However, apart from events like the assault on the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 (a bombing that killed 241 Marines, sailors, and soldiers) and the suicide attack on the USS *Cole* by two men in a speedboat, the last time Americans had come face to face with this culturally different form of warfare was in the Pacific War against the Japanese. The terror attacks of 11 September 2001 spawned a vast "instant" literature seeking to answer a large number of disparate questions. What do these terror attacks on the continental United States mean for homeland defense and national missile defense? Who is Usama Bin Laden?

How were the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon planned? How does the shadowy Al-Qaeda network function?

There has been very little writing, however, that deals with Bin Laden's thought and the rationale for the Al-Qaeda. Raymond Tanter describes Bin Laden as a freelancer who is completely independent of states yet operates within a state and may collaborate with rogue regimes. However, Tanter offers little about the man and his ideas.<sup>5</sup> Yossef Bodansky has produced a vast compendium of myths, facts, and half-truths, all lacking documentation.<sup>6</sup> Mary Anne Weaver presents a biographical summary of Bin Laden's life but no detailed analysis of his philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

Major studies of Bin Laden are reported to be on the way, but in the meantime, a short piece by Michael Dobbs in the *Washington Post* and a presentation by Dr. Bard O'Neill on Bin Laden's view of the world warrant mention.<sup>8</sup> By far the most detailed and complex analysis of the religious background of Bin Laden's thought is a study by Rosalind Gwynne.<sup>9</sup>

What, then, is Bin Laden's philosophy, with its origins, message, and goals—in other words, his worldview? In times of crisis, tragedy, or war, human beings tend to view things in Manichean terms—as a struggle between the good and the bad, viewed as equally powerful—and to portray an antagonist as unmitigatedly evil. However, the best way ultimately to defeat one's enemies is to understand them.

Our quest for understanding relies on a three-level methodological framework. First, in order to understand Bin Laden's conception of world order, two interrelated analytical steps are necessary. We need to understand the political, cultural, and social milieu, or context, within which Bin Laden arose—some of the political ideas of the Islamists who influenced him.

The context of the Arab world in particular, and the Islamic world in general, is one of turmoil as a result of the declining political legitimacy of rulers and of massive socioeconomic and identity crises. Relatedly, we need to understand



that Bin Laden is not among the foremost Islamists; nor are his ideas particularly original. Over the past two decades, Islamists have sought to explain the causes of the political, socioeconomic, and identity-related crises of their own societies and of the Islamic world and to provide solutions to them. Bin Laden drew many of his ideas from such Islamists, in particular the Egyptian Muhammad Abdel Salam Al-Farag, who was executed in 1982 for his role in the assassination of President Anwar Al-Sadat. Farag himself was not an original thinker; indeed, more famous scholars offer a deeper understanding of the philosophical wellsprings of Islamic fundamentalism. Farag

is important because he wrote a manifesto of action for the Islamic fundamentalists.

Second, we need to address Bin Laden's own ideas, by tracing his evolution from the unremarkable scion of a wealthy family into an Islamist in 1979 and then proceeding to a careful textual analysis of some interviews over the last several years. It will be necessary to keep in mind, however, that Bin Laden is a man more of action than of words.

Third, what does it all mean? What is Bin Laden trying to achieve in the larger scheme of things? Does his war against the United States, and by extension the rest of the West, portend a "clash of civilizations" between the West and the Islamic world?<sup>10</sup> He may see it in such terms, but does this mean that the West should? If in fact the West succumbs to the siren song of those who would welcome such a clash, the implications will be far-reaching and ominous.

#### POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The context from which Usama Bin Laden emerged was that of the Arab world. Bin Laden, after all, is an Arab from Saudi Arabia, even though he later based himself in non-Arab Afghanistan. In this context, it is instructive to begin with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 following its defeat in World War I. The Arabic-speaking peoples who had been a part of this Turkish-ruled multi-ethnic empire sought to found an independent Arab state, or states. In a remarkable study, the noted Arab-American scholar Fouad Ajami borrowed from T. E. Lawrence the phrase "dream palace" to describe the intellectual edifice of secular nationalism and modernity that the Arabs constructed and thought would constitute the theoretical underpinnings of their entry into the modern world.<sup>11</sup>

##### *The "Catastrophe"*

The imposition following World War I of European colonialism, particularly in its British and French variants, did not dim Arab optimism concerning the future. Indeed, the adherence of many Arab thinkers to imported European notions of secular nationalism and modernity led them to object to colonialism specifically because of the resulting underdevelopment and the lack of legitimacy of puppet regimes. Some Arab thinkers and politicians in the interwar years turned their backs on secular, liberal nationalism, because of its association with Britain and France, and espoused radical nationalist tendencies and far-right ideologies that looked on Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy with sympathy. Ultimately, though, Arabs saw their salvation in ideas brought from the West. Very few subscribed to the view that a return to the precepts of Islam constituted a solution to the subjugation of the Arab world to colonialism and to its lack of development.

Even in the 1950s and 1960s, when independence came and the elites of the colonial regimes were overthrown by supposedly forward-looking modernizers, many Arab thinkers and some rulers continued to believe that the moderniza-

---

*What, then, is Bin Laden's philosophy, with its origins, message, and goals—in other words, his worldview?*

---

tion of their societies lay in the implementation of a nationalist and socialist agenda. Modern societies, dynamic economies, and powerful armies were the visible

outcomes desired by the post–World War II “enlightened” dictators who emerged in many Arab countries. They did not achieve those outcomes. The humiliating Arab defeat at the hands of Israel in 1967 became, in the view of Fouad Ajami, the Waterloo of Arab secular nationalism. This defeat was known in Arabic as *al nakba*, the catastrophe, a term denoting something deeper than a mere battlefield reverse. Indeed, the defeat was a sad commentary on the entire Arab world, but particularly on the modernizing regimes, which had been shown to be corrupt, tin-pot dictatorships. Their economies were a mess; they had not created a new “socialist man,” with progressive ideas; certainly, they had not built powerful armies.

Not surprisingly, no sooner had the Arab militaries been defeated than a whole generation of intellectuals and politicians sought to analyze the causes. The secularists argued that the Arab states had been defeated by a modern and advanced power, that the Arabs had lost because they had failed to modernize effectively and thoroughly. Their solution was to deepen the quest for modernity. Others were more conservative, arguing that the solution was a blending of Arab and Islamic culture with the best that the Western world had to offer in the way of technology.<sup>12</sup>

#### *The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism*

However, it was the views of a group of thinkers who came to be known as “Islamic fundamentalists” that became most prominent. Islamic fundamentalism is not a new phenomenon, but it has gained strength whenever great stress has been placed on Arab or other Muslim societies.<sup>13</sup> The 1967 defeat constituted such a period in Arab history. Some Islamic fundamentalists argued that Israel had won the 1967 war because its people had remained true to their faith, whereas the Arab world had lost because its rulers and people had turned away from their own faith, Islam. Others took the point farther, arguing forcefully that the Arab world needed to turn its back on imported and alien ideologies and return to Islam. They dismissed Western approaches, such as the idea and practice of the secular nation-state, as *hulul mustawrada*, “imported solutions.”<sup>14</sup> The continued failures of all Arab regimes following the defeat of 1967 provided

more ammunition to the Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, *The Economist* put it concisely and accurately not long after the 11 September 2001 attack:

The past three decades have provided fertile ground for these ideas [Islamic fundamentalism]. Nearly every Muslim country has experienced the kind of social stress that generates severe doubt, discontent and despair. Populations have exploded. Cities, once the abode of the privileged, have been overrun by impoverished, discontented provincials. The authoritarian nature of many postcolonial governments, the frequent failure of their great plans, and their continued dependence on western money, arms and science have discredited their brand of secularism. The intrusion of increasingly liberal western ways, brought by radio, films, television, the Internet and tourism, has engendered schism by seducing some and alienating others.<sup>16</sup>

To sum up, the nation-states of the Arab world, and of the Islamic world in general, have failed to meet the triple challenge of modernity, economic development, and political legitimacy. Islamic fundamentalists point to this failure as grounds for opposition to imported solutions and for acceptance of their own concept—the *nizam Islami*, the Islamic order. Before discussing what some Islamists mean by “Islamic order” and their various strategies for bringing it about, a few words about Islam itself are necessary.

*The Islamic Divine Order.* Unlike Christianity, Islam is both a religion and a sociopolitical system. There is no separation between church and state, between God and Caesar. The Prophet Muhammad was both a religious figure, who received the Koran as a revelation from God, and a political ruler, who conducted affairs of state, engaged in diplomatic interactions with his neighbors, and fought wars against his enemies. There was in Islam no Reformation like that which Christianity underwent in the sixteenth century; in fact, the very notion is theoretically alien to the Islamic community, or *Umma*—“theoretically,” because for most of the history of Islam, Muslims have not really lived under an Islamic order. The Ottoman Empire, which ruled the vast majority of Arabs and Muslim peoples for close to five hundred years, could be conceived of as an Islamic order only by stretching the notion; the sultans in Istanbul were often corrupt and dissolute men who came to power by illegitimate means and were ultimately incapable of protecting the Islamic community from the depredations of foreign powers.

Modern rulers in the Arab and Muslim worlds have fared no better; their litany of failures and defeats has been long and sorrowful. The Islamic fundamentalists’ own vision of rule calls for the implementation of *hakimiyat Allah*, God’s rule, under which the divine law, the *Sharia*, would hold sway. An Islamic divine order is one that is characterized by the sovereignty of God alone. The head of such an Islamic state exercises power legitimately only insofar as he carries out

the will of God—that is to say, the injunctions of the *Sharia*. This Islamic divine order stands in stark contrast to constructs created by Western man and im-

---

*The Arab defeat at the hands of Israel in 1967 was known in Arabic as al nakba, the catastrophe; it was a sad commentary on the Arab modernizing regimes.*

---

ported into the Islamic societies. Man-made political orders, such as secular-liberal or Marxist polities, assert that sovereignty belongs to man. This, in the Islamic divine order, is blasphemy—God alone

is sovereign. Muslims who live under man-made political orders exist in a modern *jahiliyyah*, originally a Koranic term describing the state of ignorance and barbarism that prevailed in Arabia before the revelations to the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>17</sup> In the modern context, *jahiliyyah* refers to societies that are antithetical to Islamic order.

If Islamic order is the solution, how is it brought about? As Lenin asked, *chto delat’?* What is to be done?<sup>18</sup> Taken to their logical conclusion, the political views of many Islamic fundamentalists inevitably imply violent confrontation with the state. But the reality of power relationships, to paraphrase Samuel Johnson, concentrates the mind wonderfully. Fighting the Arab state poses major problems. Notwithstanding its decay and corruption, the Arab nation-state has a formidable apparatus, in the shape of large security services and paramilitary forces. In fact, one could argue convincingly that one of the few successes of the modern Arab state—its ability to survive in spite of its multitude of problems—has been due simply to its efficient, multilayered, and well funded security apparatus. Nonetheless, in the early 1990s Islamic fundamentalists launched bloody armed struggles against the secular states of Algeria and Egypt.<sup>19</sup> Neither has yet collapsed. They have been weakened and their legitimacy further battered, but the Arab state, as represented by those two countries as well as by Syria and Iraq—both of which have faced their own Islamic radicals—has been as ruthless as its opponents.

Not surprisingly, given this disparity in power, some Islamic fundamentalists have focused their attention on the individual within society, or on the society itself; this approach, a form of Basil Liddell Hart’s strategy of the “indirect approach,” avoids head-on confrontation with the state and seeks to re-Islamize individuals in their daily lives, in the hope that they will break radically with the manners and customs of “impious” society. Others have adopted a broader and more peaceful approach that seeks to re-Islamize society as a whole by propagating Islamic cultural values throughout such institutions as the media, the judiciary, entertainment, etc. The commanding heights of the state, so to speak, are left alone, because any assault on the political leadership, public institutions, or armed forces elicits a vigorous and vicious response. Of course, both indirect strategies

ultimately undermine secular foundations of the nation-state; neither is easy to combat, as the secular Turkish state has discovered over the last decade.<sup>20</sup>

*The Neglected Duty.* Some extremist Islamic fundamentalists continue to preach the necessity and virtue of direct action, of armed struggle. To legitimize and promote such a proactive approach in the face of the pitfalls and dangers, one needs a justification. That justification has appeared in a little-known manifesto, *Al-Faridah Al-Gha'ibah* (the neglected duty), by Muhammad Abdel Salam Al-Farag. The work of this Egyptian Islamic radical, who was a member of Al-Jihad, is critical to understanding Usama Bin Laden's conception of world order and his choice of direct confrontation.<sup>21</sup>

Farag begins his manifesto by asking, "Do we live in an Islamic state?" A Muslim lives in an Islamic polity if its rulers follow the Islamic law. If not, Muslims are said to be in the *dar al Kufr*, abode of infidels. Rebellion against such a system is permissible. Farag quotes the Prophet Muhammad: "If you have proof of infidelity [you] must fight it."<sup>22</sup> He dismisses all the possible peaceful ways that have been put forward for the establishment of an Islamic polity.<sup>23</sup> The only way, says Farag, is *jihad*, which is imperative against oppressive and iniquitous rulers.

The meaning of *jihad* has been a cause of considerable controversy among Western scholars of Islam and its popular interpreters. It has erroneously been taken to mean "holy war."<sup>24</sup> The phrase meaning "holy war" is *harb mukaddasah*;<sup>25</sup> *jihad* conveys striving or exertion (that is, fighting) in the way of God—against the evil in oneself, against Satan, against apostates (*murtadd*) within one's society, or against infidels. For Farag, the most important *jihad* is the third one. It is so important that *jihad*, says Farag, should be the sixth pillar of the Islamic faith (see the table). This is a striking innovation, since Islam's five pillars of faith—individual and social obligations—were prescribed by the Prophet Muhammad in a *hadith*, or saying.

Farag argues that the Islamists must focus first on the enemy at home: "We must begin . . . by establishing the rule of God in our nation. . . . [T]he first battlefield for *jihad* is the uprooting of these infidel leaders and replacing them with an Islamic system from which we can build."<sup>26</sup> Only afterward can the enemy "who is afar" (in Farag's words) be combatted. Usama Bin Laden seems to have

---

#### PILLARS OF ISLAM

---

<i>Shahada</i>	profession of faith
<i>Salat</i>	prayers
<i>Qakat</i>	almsgiving or charity
<i>Sawm</i>	fasting
<i>Hajj</i>	pilgrimage

---

reversed the order somewhat, in that he has concentrated primarily on the enemy who is technically afar, the United States, rather than on the impious rulers of Islamic states. But the situation by the 1990s was far different from when Farag was executed in 1982. In the 1990s the United States established a visible and looming

presence in the Arabian Peninsula—the “land of the two holy mosques,” in Bin Laden’s language. In this context, Bin Laden, who focuses his ire on the United States as the support of its “puppets,” the Al-Sauds, sees the enemy at home and the enemy who is afar as intricately linked in a symbiotic relationship.

Finally, *jihad*, says Farag, allows all kinds of operational tactics. Deceiving and lying to the enemy is permissible, as it allows “victory with the fewest losses and by the easiest means possible.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, infiltrating the infidels’ ranks and appearing to be one of them is also permissible.<sup>28</sup> Farag also mentions the importance of detailed planning before the battle is joined.

Farag’s exposition of *jihad* influenced many within the present circles of Islamic revolutionary action; one of these was Usama Bin Laden. Bin Laden may have read Farag on his own; it is more likely that Farag’s ideas were passed on to him by his second in charge, the fugitive Egyptian surgeon Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri.<sup>29</sup>

## THE EVOLUTION OF A TERRORIST

Usama Bin Muhammad Bin Laden was born in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, in 1957. He was the seventeenth of fifty-two children, and the seventh son sired by Sheikh Muhammad Bin Laden, who had come to Saudi Arabia in 1930 from the Hadramaut region of Yemen.<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Bin Laden came into Saudi Arabia a destitute man; he would die in 1968 (in an airplane crash) a billionaire. Over the decades he established his family as the wealthiest in the construction industry in Saudi Arabia, with strong financial ties and bonds of friendship to the royal family. Nothing in his son’s early years indicated that Usama, born into wealth and privilege, was destined to achieve notoriety on the world stage.

### *The Transformation of 1979*

Bin Laden’s father was dominating and domineering, and he imposed discipline and a strict social and religious code on all his children. Some accounts say Bin Laden was quite religious, living in a city, Jeddah, that was exposed to the thought of many Islamic scholars. Others argue that Bin Laden was not at all religious and had imbibed liberal ideas from his Syrian mother, a progressive woman who was his father’s fourth wife. Bin Laden attended King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah and in 1979 earned a degree—in economics and management, by some accounts, or in civil engineering, by others. It is difficult to get a clear-cut picture of Bin Laden’s early years. Unlike many other committed fundamentalists, Bin Laden never lived or studied in the West. However, he is an educated man, like many others who succumbed to radical politics through distaste for, and frustration with, the conditions prevailing in their societies.

We should judge the year 1979 as transformative in Bin Laden's life. In that year three major events shook the Middle East. On 26 March, Egypt and Israel made peace, a peace that was denounced by Arabs and Muslims the world over as a sellout. Two months earlier, an Iranian revolution led by an ascetic cleric, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, toppled the shah, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi,

---

*Are we witnessing the clash of civilizations, or is the struggle against Bin Laden primarily a military and law-enforcement campaign? Both are losing strategies.*

---

the most powerful ruler in the Middle East and the most important pillar of U.S. security and economic interests in the Persian Gulf. Finally, in December, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, a Muslim

country with an unstable Marxist puppet government aligned with the Soviet Union. We do not know whether the first two events, momentous as they were, had much impact on Bin Laden; the last event definitely did. In one of his earliest interviews Bin Laden recalled, "When the invasion of Afghanistan started, I was enraged and went there at once. I arrived within days, before the end of 1979."<sup>31</sup>

Bin Laden may have been exaggerating the alacrity with which he traveled to Afghanistan, but the Soviet invasion was certainly important for him, in two major ways. First, it was an act by an external enemy, an infidel and godless enemy, against an Islamic country. This led Bin Laden to focus his wrath on the enemy outside of Islam rather than on the internal oppressive ruler. Second, the *jihād* in Afghanistan brought Bin Laden face to face with the military and technological strength of a superpower. He was impressed in some ways, yet disdainful in others. He and the contingent of Muslim volunteers from Arab countries—on which more below—fought the Soviets to a standstill in a couple of battles.<sup>32</sup> Bin Laden thought that the Soviets were admirably ruthless but also paper tigers: "The myth of the super power was destroyed not only in my mind but also in the minds of all Muslims. Slumber and fatigue vanished."<sup>33</sup>

#### *Bin Laden's Political Philosophy and Strategy of Direct Action*

The evolution of Bin Laden's political philosophy will be examined from the early 1990s to the present, through a textual analysis of his interviews, his *fatwas* (rulings), and his "epistles," or edicts. All of these point to his tactics and conceptions of world order, from the struggle in Afghanistan to his current struggle against the United States.

*The Afghanistan War and Exile.* Upon his arrival in Afghanistan, Bin Laden began to develop his conception of who the outside enemy was, a view that he articulated to a French journalist in 1995—it was the communists and the West. "I did not fight against the communist threat while forgetting the peril from the

West. . . . I discovered that it was not enough to fight in Afghanistan, but that we had to fight on all fronts against communist or Western oppression. The urgent thing was communism but the next target was America. . . . This is an open war up to the end, until victory.”<sup>34</sup>

In Bin Laden’s eyes, he and the Afghan guerrillas were aligned at the time with the Americans solely because they were fighting a common enemy. It is not clear what relationship he had, if any, with the Central Intelligence Agency, which was

---

*Fundamentalists point to the failure of Arab nation-states as grounds for opposition to imported solutions and for acceptance of their own concept—the Islamic order.*

---

pouring money and arms into Afghanistan. Whatever the case, Bin Laden regarded America as an enemy; if he did accept funds and weapons, it simply indicated his willingness to collaborate operationally with one ideological enemy in order to go after another. (In this connection, it would be useful to know whether he has since accepted support from regional states with which he and his network have little ideological affinity.)

Second, the war in Afghanistan showed Bin Laden’s modus operandi, political and organizational skills, flexibility, and opportunism. Contrary to popular belief, he did not rush into Afghanistan, AK-47 in hand, to battle the Soviets personally. The *jihād* was not only a matter of fighting, dying, and killing in the name of God. It required extensive preparation, a logistical infrastructure, political support for the Afghan fighters, funds, and the recruitment of Muslim volunteers from other parts of the Islamic world. Bin Laden did not participate in major battles at this stage. Between 1979 and 1982, in fact, he was in Afghanistan for only short periods. He made several trips out to collect money and matériel for the guerrillas. In late 1982 he took back construction and earth-moving machinery; an Iraqi engineer friend used it to dig massive tunnels and caves into the mountains in Bakhhar Province for hospitals and weapons depots.

In 1984 he formalized his role in the Afghan conflict, establishing a guesthouse in Peshawar for Muslim volunteers on their way to the war, and cofounding (with the well-known Palestinian Islamist ‘Abdullah Azzam) the Maktab al Khidamat, or *Jihād* Service Bureau. The bureau was a propaganda and charity organization whose publications ultimately attracted thousands of Arabs and other Muslims to fight in the war.

By 1984 these volunteers were arriving in significant numbers. At the height of the conflict the “Afghan Arabs” included fifteen thousand from Saudi Arabia, five thousand from Yemen, three to five thousand from Egypt, two thousand from Algeria, a thousand from the Arab states of the Gulf, a thousand more from Libya, and several hundred from Iraq. Apparently Bin Laden played a crucial role in facilitating the entry into Afghanistan of these willing recruits.<sup>35</sup> He

commanded some of the Afghan Arabs, and in 1986 he decided to enter the battle actively against the Soviet forces. Among the fighters under his command were former senior military officers from Egypt and Syria, with combat experience and with training in the Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup>

Bin Laden continued to pay attention to preparations and infrastructure. He cultivated people in high places to fill the coffers for the war effort against the

---

*Bin Laden's ideas and visions are unfamiliar to most Americans, who find the idea of a holy war in this day and age bizarre.*

---

Soviets. One of Bin Laden's most productive years was 1988, when he realized that he needed better documentation of the activities of the Afghan Arabs. A formalized

structure was essential to keep track of the comings and goings of the foreign fighters and to list their wounded and dead. For this he set up Al-Qaeda, meaning simply "the base."<sup>37</sup> In due course Al-Qaeda developed into a large clearing-house for a host of loosely aligned radical Islamic organizations.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, in a nutshell, if Bin Laden entered Afghanistan as a dilettante, he left as a committed believer. Apart from articulation of his views of the enemy and his recognition that the enemy was not invulnerable, he set down little in the way of political philosophy or worldview. In 1989 the Soviets acknowledged defeat and withdrew from Afghanistan. It was clear to most people by then that the Soviet Union was a superpower in terminal decline. Bin Laden believed that the Afghan Arabs had contributed in no small measure to its collapse.

Interestingly, when Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia in 1989 he began to focus his attention on an enemy that was close at hand—not the Saudi regime but Saddam Hussein of Iraq. In 1989 Bin Laden began to warn of impending Iraqi aggression against the kingdom. He saw Saddam Hussein as a greedy and aggressive secular Arab nationalist, an anti-Islamic ruler who could threaten two holy places, Mecca and Medina. In August of 1990—perhaps another milestone year for Bin Laden—Iraq invaded Kuwait. In Bin Laden's eyes, one of the key duties of an Islamic ruler is to defend his territory from aggression. He suggested that Saudi Arabia augment its defenses, on which the rulers had spent so lavishly, with thousands of former Afghan Arabs.

To the consternation of Bin Laden, the royal family decided instead to invite the Americans, infidels, to defend the holy places. In 1998, in his declaration of the "World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders" (discussed below), there was clear evidence of Bin Laden's dismay, expressed in masterful Arabic imagery:

Since God laid down the Arabian peninsula, created its desert, and surrounded it with its seas, no calamity has ever befallen it like these Crusader hosts that have

spread in it like locusts, crowding its soil, eating its fruits, and destroying its verdure; and this at a time when the nations contend against the Muslims like diners jostling around a bowl of food.<sup>39</sup>

What he saw as an American invasion led Bin Laden in 1995 to articulate his first major critique of the Saudi regime, in an “Open Letter to King Fahd.” In it Bin Laden took the royal family to task for lack of commitment to Islam, squandering of public funds and oil money, inability to implement a viable defense policy, and dependence on non-Muslims for protection. This came very close to denying the political legitimacy of the Al-Sauds. In his communiqué Bin Laden advocated a campaign of small-scale attacks on U.S. forces in the kingdom. The royal family stripped him of his nationality and sent him into exile, first to Sudan and ultimately back to Afghanistan. Not long after his falling-out with the Saudi royal family, attacks were conducted against U.S. facilities in Dhahran (1995) and at Khobar (1996). Bin Laden did not claim “credit” for these attacks but, in what was to become a trademark following attacks in which he was implicated, applauded the perpetrators: “What happened . . . when 24 Americans were killed in two bombings is clear evidence of the huge anger of Saudi people against America. The Saudis now know their real enemy is America.”<sup>40</sup>

*“Declaration of War against the Americans.”* The philosophical underpinnings of Bin Laden’s opposition to America are to be found in two key epistles. The first is the “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” issued on 23 August 1996.<sup>41</sup> We must understand the regional and global context in which what is being called the “Ladenese Epistle” first circulated. Muslims, says Bin Laden, from Palestine to Iraq, from Chechnya to Bosnia, have been slaughtered in large numbers, their lands expropriated, and their wealth looted, by non-Muslims:

The people of Islam [have] suffered from aggression, iniquity, and injustice imposed on them by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators, to the extent that the Muslims’ blood became the cheapest and their wealth was looted in the hands of enemies. Their blood was spilled in Palestine and Iraq. The horrifying pictures of the massacre of Qana, in Lebanon, are still fresh in our memory. Massacres in [Tajikistan, Burma, Kashmir, Assam, the Philippines, Somalia, Chechnya, and Bosnia-Herzegovina] took place, massacres that send shivers in the body and shake the conscience.<sup>42</sup>

What, one may ask, has all this to do with America? These events were unfortunate, but America cannot be blamed for them. Not so, Bin Laden—and many others in the region, even some who do not share his vision—would respond. America, they would say, provided some of the arms used in massacres of Muslims; for example, the killing of hundreds of Lebanese civilians in Qana in 1996

in the wake of the Israeli Operation GRAPES OF WRATH involved American weapons. In the Yugoslav civil war, America stood passively by, mouthing platitudes about human rights, as Muslim civilians were massacred. America does nothing while Russians slaughter Chechens yearning to be free of Moscow's yoke. Further, they would reply, America says nothing about the depredations of the Arab and Muslim rulers against their own peoples.

However, the focus of Bin Laden's anger in the 1996 epistle was the continued American "occupation" of the land of the holy places, a presence that the corrupt Al-Sauds had permitted at a time when their country suffered from economic distress and demoralization. Several attempts by well-meaning citizens to draw the attention of the Al-Sauds to the terrible state of the country had been to no avail. Why?

Everyone [has] agreed that the situation cannot be rectified . . . unless the root of the problem is tackled. Hence it is essential to hit the main enemy who divided the *Umma* into small and little countries and pushed it, for the last few decades, into a state of confusion. The Zionist-Crusader alliance moves quickly to contain and abort any "corrective movement" appearing in the Islamic countries.<sup>43</sup>

In this regard, one of the most important duties of Muslims is "pushing the Americans out of the holy land." To lend weight to his argument Bin Laden quotes a noted Islamic jurist of medieval times, Ibn Taymiyyah, who argued that when Muslims face a serious threat, they must ignore differences and collaborate to get the enemy out of the *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam). As Bin Laden put it, "If there [is] more than one duty to be carried out, then the most important one should receive priority. Clearly after Belief (*Imaan*) there is no more important duty than pushing the American enemy out of the holy land. . . . The ill effect of ignoring these [minor] differences, at a given period of time, is much less than the ill effect of the occupation of the Muslims' land by the great *Kufr* [unbelief]."<sup>44</sup> If the Muslims fight one another instead of the great *Kufr*, they will incur casualties, exhaust their own economic and financial resources, destroy their infrastructures and oil industries, and expose themselves to even greater control by the Zionist-Crusader alliance.

Also in this epistle Bin Laden articulates his disdain for the United States. After the attacks on American installations in Saudi Arabia, William Perry, the secretary of defense at the time, declared (Bin Laden says) that the explosions had "taught him one lesson: that is, not to withdraw when attacked by coward terrorists." Bin Laden's response in his 1996 epistle is an interesting look into his mind-set:

We say to the Defense Secretary that his talk can induce a grieving mother to laughter! . . . Where was this false courage of yours when the explosion in Beirut took

place in 1983? . . . You [were] turned into scattered pits and pieces at that time; 241 mainly marine soldiers were killed. And where was this courage of yours when two explosions made you leave Aden in less than twenty-four hours! But your most disgraceful case was in Somalia; where—after vigorous propaganda about the power of the USA and its post-Cold War leadership of the new world order—you moved tens of thousands of an international force, including twenty-eight thousand American soldiers, into Somalia. However, when tens of your soldiers were killed in minor battles and one American pilot was dragged in the streets of Mogadishu you left the area carrying disappointment, humiliation, defeat and your dead with you. . . . You have been disgraced by Allah and you withdrew. The extent of your impotence and weaknesses became very clear.<sup>45</sup>

Bin Laden, then, views the United States as a paper tiger, like the Soviet Union—which, however, he considers a more worthy opponent, because it fought hard and ruthlessly in Afghanistan. However, Bin Laden may be making a mistake here. Americans are often blinded by what the British strategic analyst Ken Booth once called “strategic ethnocentrism,” inability to perceive other cultures or societies in an empathetic manner, or to understand them. Bin Laden may suffer from the same disease vis-à-vis the United States. He may have underestimated the nation’s resilience and ingenuity; he may believe that after the Somalia experience it would always respond in a lumbering, technological manner and do no more than launch a few cruise missiles. These assumptions may be among the first cracks that can be exploited in the edifice of his conception of the world.

Nonetheless, Bin Laden does not underestimate the difficulty of fighting the United States. Islamic fundamentalists elsewhere—such as Sheikh Hussain Fadlallah of the Lebanese organization Hizballah—have had to deal with an imbalance of power between their groups and their enemy, Israel. For his part, Bin Laden is quite aware of the technological superiority of the United States:

Nevertheless, it must be obvious to you that, due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces, a suitable means of fighting must be adopted—that is, using fast-moving light forces that work under complete secrecy. In other words to initiate a guerrilla war, where the sons of the nation, and not the military forces, take part in it. And as you know, it is wise, in the present circumstances, for the armed military forces not to be engaged in a conventional fight with the forces of the crusader enemy.<sup>46</sup>

Nowhere in the 1996 epistle did Bin Laden refer to the type of operation that was to occur on 11 September 2001 (though, of course, that does not preclude its possibility). He focused on the creation of the kinds of assets needed to attack forward-positioned U.S. forces, such as those in Saudi Arabia. How does one redress an imbalance of power? Bin Laden mentions a number of ideas in his

“Declaration of War,” such as boycotting American goods. More interesting is his belief, expressed elsewhere in 1998, that it would be permissible for him to acquire weapons of mass destruction: “Acquiring weapons for the defense of

---

*Bin Laden thought that the Soviets were admirably ruthless but also paper tigers.*

---

Muslims is a religious duty. If I have indeed acquired these weapons, then I thank God for enabling me to do so. And if I seek to ac-

quire these weapons, I am carrying out a duty. It would be a sin for Muslims not to try to possess the weapons that would prevent the infidels from inflicting harm on Muslims.”<sup>47</sup>

It seems also that the strategy of using “fast-moving light forces” includes the salutary application of terror.<sup>48</sup> In another part of the epistle Bin Laden says that terrorism against American forces is legitimate: “Terrorizing you, *while you are carrying arms on our land*, is a legitimate and morally demanded duty. . . . [Y]our example and our example is like a snake which entered into a house of a man and got killed by him. The coward is the one who lets you walk, while carrying arms, freely on his land and provides you with peace and security.”<sup>49</sup>

The italicized passage is important, as it highlights an essential difference between Bin Laden’s conception of terrorism and that of Americans: he considers the killing of unarmed U.S. personnel in their offices or barracks legitimate; the American view is that the indiscriminate killing of unarmed personnel is clear-cut terrorism and illegitimate.

The 1996 epistle ended on this intriguing note. However, later that year, in the October–November 1996 issue of an Islamic magazine, *Nida’ ul Islam*, Bin Laden dismissed the notion that his declaration of war against the United States presence in the holy land was terrorism. Instead, he argued, it was what America and its ally Israel were doing to the Muslim peoples that constituted terrorism:

The evidence overwhelmingly shows America and Israel killing the weaker men, women and children in the Muslim world and elsewhere. A few examples of this are seen in the recent Qana massacre in Lebanon, and the death of more than 600,000 Iraqi children because of the shortage of food and medicine which resulted from the boycotts and sanctions against the Muslim Iraqi people. . . . Not to forget the dropping of the atom bombs on cities with their entire populations of children, elderly and women, on purpose and in a premeditated manner, as was the case with Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>50</sup>

In his “Declaration of War against the United States” Bin Laden did not target American civilians, only U.S. military personnel stationed in Saudi Arabia. However, that was to change dramatically.

*“Declaration of the World Islamic Front.”* On 22 February 1998, an edict over Bin Laden’s signature was published in the Arabic-language paper *Al-Quds al-Arabi*; it was entitled the “Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders.” It was a more significant document than the “Ladenese Epistle.” It articulated more fully why Bin Laden views the United States as an enemy and how he proposed to deal with that enemy.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1998 epistle he offered three major reasons why America is to be considered an enemy of the Islamic peoples:

First—For more than seven years the United States [has been] occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of its territories, Arabia, plundering its riches, overwhelming its rulers, humiliating its people, threatening its neighbors, and using its bases in the peninsula as a spearhead to fight against the neighboring Islamic peoples. . . .

Second—Despite the immense destruction inflicted on the Iraqi people at the hands of the Crusader-Jewish alliance and in spite of the appalling number of dead, exceeding a million, the Americans nevertheless, in spite of all this, are trying once more to repeat this dreadful slaughter. . . . They come again today to destroy what remains of this people and to humiliate their Muslim neighbors.

Third—While the purposes of the Americans in these wars are religious and economic, they also serve the petty state of the Jews, to direct attention from their occupation of Jerusalem and the killing of Muslims in it.

There is no better proof of all this than their eagerness to destroy Iraq, the strongest of the neighboring Arab states, and their attempt to dismember all the states of the region, such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia and Egypt and Sudan, into petty states, whose division and weakness would ensure the survival of Israel and the continuation of the calamitous Crusader occupation of the lands of Arabia.<sup>52</sup>

These three crimes constituted “a clear declaration of war by the Americans against God, his Prophet, and the Muslims.” When the Muslim world goes on the offensive, war is conducted by professional soldiers and even volunteers; however, when it is under attack, the defense of the community becomes the duty of every individual Muslim. The Islamic *umma*, the declaration held, was now fighting a defensive war against the aggression of the Zionist-Crusader alliance; therefore, as the *ulema* (the authorities on theology and Islamic law) had uniformly ruled for many centuries, *jihad* was the duty of every Muslim. This is an interesting and subtle distinction; because of it, Bin Laden can claim that he is not responsible when outraged individual Muslims vent their anger on the United States but that he can understand their actions and justify them.

The declaration’s most important part is a *fatwa*, or ruling:

To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able, in any country where this is possible, until the Aqsa Mosque

[in Jerusalem] and the Haram Mosque [in Mecca] are freed from their grip and until their armies, shattered and broken-winged, depart from all the lands of Islam, incapable of threatening any Muslim.<sup>53</sup>

This document is remarkable not because it constitutes a declaration of war against America or because it makes no distinction between innocent civilians and military personnel but because it transcends the bounds of fundamentalist rhetoric and discourse. It reaches out to those in the Arab and Islamic worlds who do not share the agenda or language of the Islamic fundamentalists.

*The 28 September 2001 Interview and 8 October Speech.* Indeed, even secular Arabs and most nonfundamentalist Muslims view with mounting outrage and despair what America has done to Iraq and its policies with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is crucial for understanding why many people in the Arab and Islamic worlds viewed the destruction of the World Trade Center and the damage to the Pentagon with barely concealed glee, studied indifference, or awe.

In an interview on 28 September 2001, Bin Laden expressed his reactions to the terror attacks and the fact that he was viewed as the chief culprit: “I have already said that I am not involved in the 11 September attacks, nor do I consider the killing of innocent women, children, and other humans as an appreciable act. Islam strictly forbids causing harm to innocent women, children, and other people.”<sup>54</sup>

This is very interesting. Bin Laden here seemed to have retreated from his earlier claim that war against all Americans is permissible and that there is no distinction between innocents and legitimate military targets. However, his retreat back into the mainstream of Islamic thought on just war—which calls for such a distinction between innocent noncombatants and combatants—must be considered a tactical ploy. Ultimately it clashes with his view, derived from Farag, that *jihad* is more important than anything except belief in God. If that is so, “collateral damage” sustained by innocents and noncombatants can hardly be allowed to stand in the way. If *jihad* is a central pillar of Bin Laden’s thought, his retreat on the issue of the killing of noncombatants was a pragmatic step designed to suit the realities of the situation at the time—that is, the need to avoid American retaliation.

But American retaliation did come. On 8 October, U.S. forces launched a concerted air assault on what passes for infrastructure in Afghanistan. Following the start of the American offensive against him, Bin Laden launched a verbal onslaught against the United States and its allies in the Muslim world, whom Bin Laden castigated as “hypocrites,” in an appearance that day on the controversial but popular Arab satellite television station Al-Jazeera. His comments were significant

in other ways as well. Bin Laden spoke apocalyptically of the possibility of a war between Muslim and non-Muslim, of the suffering of the Iraqi people under sanctions and of the Palestinians in their conflict with Israel. Contrary to the observations of some that Bin Laden has not been concerned with what happens in the Fertile Crescent, this was not the first time he had spoken about these issues; however, it was the first time that they had attained such prominence in his strategy.

This indicates a decision to widen his base of support beyond those ideologically sympathetic to him. Indeed, Bin Laden's speech of 8 October resonated with a number of people in the region, many of whom expressed satisfaction with that part of his message, if not with his methods or his apocalyptic vision of a clash between Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>55</sup> Certainly, Bin Laden's decision to appear on TV after the American attack indicates a sophisticated understanding of the power of the media.<sup>56</sup>

#### WHERE IT IS, WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT DOES

What does this all mean? Are we witnessing the start of the clash of civilizations, as predicted by Samuel Huntington, or is the struggle against Bin Laden primarily a military and law-enforcement campaign writ large—one that will eventually address other terrorist entities and state sponsors by the same means? Both are losing strategies, and the United States cannot afford either of them.

The Western and Islamic worlds have many common attributes, but their mutual history has been one of conflict and discord since medieval times. The facts that they had more in common with each other than either had with, say, the Sinic or Hindu civilizations and that they were adjacent to one another contributed enormously to the centuries of struggle. The evolution of Western thought and ideas, and the emergence of Western military superiority from the sixteenth century onward, opened a new chasm between the two worlds. Islamic fundamentalists perceive two competing world orders, one man-made and materialistic, the other divine and spiritual. Each has claims to universalism: the adherents of each believe that its conceptions are universal and exportable—which cannot be said about the Hindu, Buddhist, or Chinese civilizations.

It is not, however, in the interest of the West to view this as a clash of Western and Muslim civilizations, for a number of reasons. First, it would play into Bin Laden's hands. He *wants* the United States and its Western allies to continue assaulting Muslim lands and peoples. This, he believes, would draw to him Muslims now sitting on the sidelines, and it might lead to the collapse of secularist traditions and pro-Western tendencies within the Arab and Muslim worlds. It would also galvanize his adherents and supporters to greater heights of zeal.

Second, adoption of the idea of a clash of civilizations would have major implications for the domestic politics of Western societies. Europe has a large

Muslim population, which is struggling within itself over identity, whether it should exist as a quasi-separate community within a secular European society or integrate itself into that society and do away with some of its older traditions. Islam is the second-largest religion in France; there are four million Arabs and Muslims in that country. The United States has six million Muslims and three million Arabs.<sup>57</sup> A declared clash of civilizations would widen the gap between these communities and the societies in which they live, with potentially dire consequences for their political liberties and rights.

Third, the conception of world order promoted by Bin Laden and other Islamic fundamentalists suffers from a fatal flaw that no thinker has been able to

---

*“Where was this false courage of yours when the explosion in Beirut took place in 1983? . . . And where was this courage of yours when two explosions made you leave Aden in less than twenty-four hours!”*

---

overcome. Islamic fundamentalists have been very good at highlighting and analyzing the weakness, backwardness, and problems afflicting current Islamic societies. They have also been good at proposing their own solutions—but

very bad at the details. They have no Islamic model to hold up as appropriate for this day and age.<sup>58</sup> The Islamic Republic of Iran cannot be a model, because it is a Shia state, whose trajectory has been very different from those of its Arab neighbors. Moreover, the Ayatollah Khomeini’s central political idea, the rule of the religious jurispudent, constituted an innovation even in Shia thought, and it has been under constant challenge since his death in 1989. Sudan is not a model either. It is a poor country, whose Islamic political system has not been able to withstand the tensions between the army, under President Omar al Bashir, and the Islamists, under the suave, Sorbonne-educated Hasan al-Turabi. Usama Bin Laden and his followers, and many other Islamic fundamentalists as well, can cause disorder and conflict with and among the West and its allies in the Islamic world; indeed, they can widen the chasm between the two sides. But it is not likely that they will be able to implement an alternative order that can constitute a successful challenge.

On the other hand, a strategy that simply takes a military and law-and-order approach, as advocated by some members of the Bush administration, is neither feasible nor *realpolitik*. This is not a war that the United States can fight alone; it needs a coalition, and its present coalition is wobbly. It would be adding fuel to the fire to attack other terror networks—in Syria, Lebanon, Libya, and Iraq—particularly in the absence of direct evidence that other groups or states were involved in the attacks of 11 September. Not even the European members of the coalition who have been America’s staunchest supporters would be willing to give the hawks within the Bush administration *carte blanche*. As for

the countries of the region, they will see an enlargement of this struggle against terrorism as an attack on Muslims and as an attempt by the United States, and its ally Israel, to settle scores with all their enemies.

Usama Bin Laden is a dangerous opponent, and so are those who might succeed him should he be killed over the course of the American onslaught. They have been able to attack America effectively. The United States is a global power with diplomatic, cultural, military, and economic interests worldwide. It is easy to attack America by acts of terror against those global interests; Bin Laden has done so in the past. But this time he brought the battle to the heart of the nation. He and his supporters have crossed a threshold.

They have attacked the United States because of *where it is*, *what it is*, and *what it does*. Of course, America is not attacked primarily for where it is—that is, nearly everywhere, and conspicuously in the Middle East; its global presence simply makes it easier to attack for the other two reasons. It is clear that America is detested by many people the world over for what it is—a successful and dynamic modern society. It has created envy among the dispossessed and revulsion among ideologically alienated groups who see it as totally antithetical to their own values or aspirations. There may be very little that can be done to assuage the anger of those who hate America for its very nature.

Some American analysts claim that terrorists hate America only for what it is.<sup>59</sup> This is undoubtedly true with respect to the terrorists themselves, but there is a large number of people in the Middle East whose primary, if not sole, issue with America is its allegedly unfair and “hypocritical” policies.<sup>60</sup> Ignoring the bubbling dissatisfaction with what the United States does, or allegedly does, would relieve Americans of some painful policy adjustments that may in fact be necessary. Many people in the Middle East see Bin Laden as sending the United States a multifaceted message, elements of which they can identify with. Indeed, Bin Laden has brilliantly established a nexus between those who hate the United States for what it is—the great seductress, spreading a culture and religion of material plenty around the globe—and those who despise it for what it does in the Middle East, as they see it—extending support to Israel, turning its back on the Palestinian quest for justice, continuing to punish Iraq for transgressions of a decade ago.<sup>61</sup>

While this article is not intended to make policy recommendations, it must conclude by supporting, however superficially in a brief space, an alternative approach—a long-range and sustained strategy with a “basket” of many options, some of which can be implemented in tandem, and others that would have to be implemented sequentially.

*Instrumentally*, the war against terror involves the use of intelligence assets and military, legal, and financial means all at the same time, in a broad-based, synergistic campaign. Despite recognition by the United States that terror constitutes one of its greatest security threats, the American war against terror has not been an effective or integrated one. Psychological warfare and humanitarian approaches are also required; to pursue them it is necessary to look carefully at socioeconomic and structural conditions that contribute to the rise of radical politics.

A number of failed states have become breeding grounds for terrorist organizations; Afghanistan and Somalia come to mind. Other states can be classified as potential hotbeds—Yemen, Sudan, Pakistan, and Algeria. Instead of focusing on potential state sponsors of terrorism, it might be efficacious to look as well at key states where conditions may ultimately promote the proliferation of terrorist infrastructures.<sup>62</sup> A well-structured international economic-aid policy to these countries could be formulated and implemented over a period of years. Such a policy should address even such micro-issues as the so-called Islamic schools (*madrassahs*) in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where very young children are indoctrinated into the belief that terrorism is just, that death in the service of their version of religion should be their highest aspiration.

*Policywise*, the United States may have to make some painful adjustments throughout the Mideast region. Although none should be implemented under pressure of terrorism, some truly far-reaching changes should be examined. For instance, must the United States permanently station ground forces on the Arabian Peninsula? If not, what does this mean for power projection and force structure? Even trickier, how might America help resolve the debilitating Arab-Israeli issue in a manner that both sides can view as fair, while making clear to the Arabs that it will not abandon Israel as an ally? What can and should be done about Iraq, which has become a point of contention for all Arabs, whether fundamentalists, secularists, members of the working class, or intellectuals? It is an issue that will not go away.

Last, but by no means least, the American tendency to ignore or brush over the questionable stability of Arab allies and the deep-seated political and socioeconomic problems besetting them works strongly against its own interests. How to persuade these countries that they must undertake reforms in order to survive, however, is a nettlesome problem. Plainly, the strategy suggested here to combat the Bin Laden phenomenon needs to be explored in greater analytical detail. In the final analysis, a comprehensive national—even international—strategy, sustained over a long period of time, is needed to win the war against terrorism. Any other way leads to the abyss.

## NOTES

1. For more details on definitions and characteristics of terrorism see Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), pp. 12–29.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–4.
3. See Luke Cyphers and Richard Whitby, “The Slickest of Killers: Educated Hijackers Ran Complex Operation,” *New York Daily News*, 16 September 2001, p. 10.
4. Raphael Israeli, “Islamikaze and Their Significance,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Autumn 1997, pp. 96–121.
5. Raymond Tanter, *Rogue Regimes: Terrorism and Proliferation* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999), pp. 263–8.
6. Yossef Bodansky, *Bin-Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (Rocklin, Calif.: Forum, 1999).
7. Mary Anne Weaver, *A Portrait of Egypt: A Journey through the World of Militant Islam* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), esp. pp. 191–209.
8. See Michael Dobbs, “Inside the Mind of Osama Bin Laden,” *Washington Post*, 20 September 2001, p. A1. Professor O’Neill, in a September 2001 presentation at National Defense University, played the role of Bin Laden. O’Neill’s presentation is the subject of analysis by John Donnelly, “Defense Scholar Offers a Chilling Bin Laden Portrayal,” *Boston Globe*, 7 October 2001, p. A28.
9. Rosalind Gwynne, “Al Qa’ida and al-Qur’an: The ‘Tafsir’ of Usamah Bin Laden,” mimeograph in this author’s possession. This study is heavy going and presupposes some familiarity with the Qur’an and the writings of key medieval Islamic scholars. Nonetheless, it is the most sophisticated analysis of the philosophical-religious foundations of Bin Laden’s thought to date.
10. The noted Princeton scholar Bernard Lewis coined the phrase “clash of civilizations” to denote a conflict between the West and the Islamic East, but Harvard’s Samuel Huntington gave it notoriety, primarily in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1997), esp. pp. 209–18.
11. Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation’s Odyssey* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), p. xi.
12. For extensive details of these debates see Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice since 1967* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 25–75.
13. During the 1960s President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt waged a long and vicious battle with the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the oldest and most established Islamic movements in the Middle East. Nasser executed a number of the organization’s key figures.
14. See Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998), p. 7.
15. For more details see Hilal Khashan, “The New World Order and the Tempo of Militant Islam,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Winter 1997.
16. “Enemies Within, Enemies Without,” *The Economist*, 22 September 2001, pp. 20–1.
17. For more details see Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993), pp. 12–4.
18. The same analogy also occurs in *ibid.*, p. 12.
19. For an extensive comparative analysis of these two insurgencies, see Lawrence E. Cline, “Egyptian and Algerian Insurgencies: A Comparison,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Autumn 1998, pp. 114–33; and Nasser Momayezi, “Islamic Revivalism and the Quest for Political Power,” *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Fall 1997, pp. 115–32. For a very descriptive analysis of the psychologically searing conflict between the Egyptian state and Islamic fundamentalists, see Weaver, *A Portrait of Egypt*.
20. This struggle for the soul of Turkey is extensively analyzed in Arnold Hottinger, “Laizismus und Re-Islamisierung in der Türkei,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 September 2001, p. 1.
21. The following discussion of Farag relies heavily on Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins*

- and *Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), a translation of the manifesto with extensive commentary and analysis. Other works used in summarizing the ideas of Farag include: David Rapoport, "Sacred Terror: A Contemporary Example from Islam," in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich, Woodrow Wilson Center Series (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 103–30; Asaf Hussain, *Political Terrorism and the State in the Middle East* (London: Mansell, 1988), pp. 83–87; and Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, pp. 201–4, 210–2, 228–30.
22. Quoted in Asaf Hussain, *Political Terrorism and the State in the Middle East*, p. 86.
  23. See Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, pp. 182–90.
  24. See Richard Martin, "Striving in the Path of Allah: A Fundamentalist Interpretation of Jihad in Egypt," *Conflict Quarterly*, Spring 1987, pp. 8–10.
  25. See Sami G. Hajjar, "Political Violence in Islam: Fundamentalism and Jihad," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Winter 1995, p. 335.
  26. Quoted in Hussain, *Political Terrorism and the State in the Middle East*, p. 86.
  27. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, p. 210.
  28. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
  29. Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri did not enter Afghanistan until 1984. Al-Zawahiri was a founder of Egypt's *Jihad* organization, four members of which killed Anwar al-Sadat in October 1981. Al-Zawahiri is an intellectual, familiar with the many currents of Egyptian Islamic fundamentalist thought. For biographical details of Al-Zawahiri see Michael Collins Dunn, "The Operations Man: Ayman al-Zawahiri," *The Estimate*, 21 September 2001; Daniel Eisenberg, "Osama's Top Brass," *Time*, 8 October 2001; Christian Miller, "The Alleged Brains behind Bin Laden," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 October 2001, p. 1; Alexandre Bucciante, "Ayman el Zawahiri, 'docteur' du Jihad Egyptien," *Le Monde*, 26 September 2001; and Ed Blanche, "Ayman al-Zawahiri: Attention Turns to the Other Prime Suspect," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 3 October 2001. For analysis of how Al-Zawahiri may have influenced Bin Laden, see my forthcoming paper "Post-Modern Terrorism: The Al-Qaeda Network."
  30. For biographical details see *Al-Watan al-Aarabi*, 12 September 2001; *Frontline*, "A Biography of Osama bin Laden," available on the World Wide Web: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/Binladen/who/bio.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/Binladen/who/bio.html).
  31. Robert Fisk, "Anti-Soviet Warrior Puts His Army on the Road to Peace," *The Independent*, 6 December 1993, p. 1.
  32. Large numbers of volunteers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Turkey were sometimes lumped together with the "Afghan Arabs."
  33. Quoted in *Frontline*, "Osama bin Laden v. the U.S.: Edicts and Statements," available on the World Wide Web: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/Binladen/who/edicts.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/Binladen/who/edicts.html).
  34. *Ibid.*
  35. For more details see Ahmed Rashid, "Les Talibans au Coeur de la destabilization regionale," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1999, pp. 4–5; Olivier Roy, "Une fondamentalisme Sunnite en panne de projet politique," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1998, pp. 8–9.
  36. See Mark Huband, *Warriors of the Prophet: The Struggle for Islam* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 1–4.
  37. The formation of Al-Qaeda came after Bin Laden split up with the cofounder of the Maktab al Khidamat, 'Abdallah Azzam, in 1988. In 1989 the latter died in a mysterious car bomb explosion that some people link to Bin Laden.
  38. This is explored in greater detail in my forthcoming "The Rise of Post-Modern Terrorism."
  39. From Bernard Lewis, "License to Kill: Usama Bin Ladin's Declaration of Jihad," *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 1998, p. 14.
  40. "Usama Bin Laden v. the U.S.: Edicts and Statements," interview, *The Independent*, 10 July 1996, excerpts available on the World Wide Web: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/Binladen/who/edicts.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/Binladen/who/edicts.html).
  41. *Declaration of War (I), (II), (III)*, available at <http://msanews.mynet.net/MSANEWS/199610/19961012.3.html>, and <http://msanews.mynet.net/MSANEWS/19961013.10.html>, and <http://msanews.mynet.net/MSANEWS/19961014.2.html>.

42. *Declaration of War (I)*, available at <http://msanews.mynet.net/MSANEWS/199610/19961012.3.html>.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Declaration of War (II)*, available at <http://msanews.mynet.net/MSANEWS/199610/19961013.10.html>.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Interview, *Time*, 23 December 1998, excerpt available on the World Wide Web: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/Binladen/who/edicts.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/Binladen/who/edicts.html).
48. On Bin Laden's attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction, see Gavin Cameron, "Multi-Track Microproliferation: Lessons from Aum Shinrikyo and Al-Qaida," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, October–December 1999, pp. 277–309; Kimberly McCloud and Matthew Osborne, "WMD Terrorism and Usama Bin Laden," Center for Non-proliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, available on the World Wide Web: <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/reports/Binladen.htm>.
49. *Declaration of War (I)* [emphasis supplied].
50. "Exclusive Interview with Usamah Bin Laden: Of Jihad and Terrorism," *Nida 'ul Islam* [The fall of Islam], October–November 1996, originally accessed at <http://msanews.mynet.net/MSANEWS/199701/19970115.2.html>.
51. Magnus Ranstorp, "Interpreting the Broader Context and Meaning of Bin-Laden's *Fatwa*," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, October–December 1998, pp. 325–7.
52. From Lewis, "License to Kill," pp. 14–5.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
54. "Full Text of Pakistani Paper's Exclusive Interview with Usamah Bin-Laden," *Ummat*, 28 September 2001, p. 1, in British Broadcasting Corporation, Monitoring Service, 29 September 2001.
55. See Susan Sachs, "Bin Laden Images Mesmerize Muslims," *New York Times*, 9 October 2001, p. 1.
56. See also Judith Miller, "Bin Laden's Media Savvy: Expert Timing of Threats," *New York Times*, 9 October 2001, p. 1.
57. Ironically, 75 percent of Arab-Americans are Christian.
58. This is addressed in great detail by the French scholar Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994).
59. See, for example, Douglas Macdonald, "Terrorists Hate U.S. for What It Is, Not What It Does," *Long Island Newsday*, 10 October 2001.
60. For details on these sentiments see, inter alia, E. A. Torriero, "Many Fear Wider War on Muslims," *Chicago Tribune*, 10 October 2001, p. 1; Howard Schneider and Lee Hockstader, "Regional Response: Ambivalence," *Washington Post*, 8 October 2001, p. 12; Neil MacFarquhar, "Anger Smoulders in the Streets, Arab Governments Temper Remarks," *New York Times*, 9 October 2001, p. 1; Mariam Isa, "Arab Nations Inhospitable to U.S.," *Washington Times*, 26 September 2001, p. 17; John Burns, "America Inspires Both Longing and Loathing in Arab World," *New York Times*, 16 September 2001, p. 1.
61. For a similar assessment see Arnold Hottinger, "Wer applaudiert Usama Bin Laden?" *Neue Zurcher Zeitung*, 26 September 2001.
62. This is explored in detail in a longer version of this paper, "The Grand Strategy of Usama Bin Laden" (in possession of author).

