

## **Terrorist Recruitment**

### **The Crucial Case of Al Qaeda's Global Jihad Terror Network**

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## **Introduction**

Terrorism is a process. It has a discernable beginning, middle, and end. Therefore, in order to understand terrorism, the various parts that make up this process must be studied and later synthesized to create a more comprehensive picture of terrorism. One important component of this picture is recruitment.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the foundations of a terrorist organization, specifically the process by which individuals become terrorists. This paper will be focused on jihadi terrorism, as this form has grown steadily over the years to become “the most significant threat to U.S. national security today.”<sup>1</sup> The terrorist organization that I will be covering throughout this paper is the transnational jihadi group al Qaeda. By examining recruitment and indoctrination as a stage of the terrorism process, one will have a better understanding as to just who individual terrorists are, where they come from, and ultimately why they do what they do. It is during this early stage of the terrorism process that an individual crosses the threshold into violent action. In short, this is where it all begins.

Most terrorist groups have a laundry list of grievances. It is not enough to address these complaints, as these complaints alone are not a sufficient cause of terrorism. If they were, there would be a far greater number of terrorists in the world committing a far greater number of attacks. Since this is not the case, other factors beyond grievances must drive an individual to embrace terrorism.

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Stern, “The Protean Enemy,” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July/August 2003), 27.

No organization, terrorist or otherwise, would be able to exist without followers. “The main resource of any terrorist organization is its militants; membership is usually recruited from the pool of supporters.”<sup>2</sup> In a way, members make up the body of the group, while the leadership constitutes the head. The ideology that drives the group is the heart. The focus of this paper is on “the body,” because it is through the members that the leadership is able to execute its desired acts. The foot soldiers allow the organization to thrive. The foot soldiers physically carry out the terrorist acts and pay the biggest price, be it death or detention. Without these foot soldiers, terrorist organizations would crumble. It is therefore important to know more about these foot soldiers, as these individuals sustain the organization. Without executioners willing to replenish the ranks, men like Osama bin Laden would be nothing more than religious lunatics who few take seriously. Because most people tend to associate terrorist organizations with their leaders, it is easy to overlook the fact that there would be no organization without the foot soldiers. Focusing on the upper echelons of an organization itself ignores one of the more important elements that constitute the organization in the first place: the members. It is this lower level of terrorist organizations that commandeers the focus of this paper.

This study is not intended to produce a definitive psychological profile of a terrorist. Many analysts agree that such a profile is not possible.<sup>3</sup> Instead, this paper seeks to map out the trajectory an individual follows in becoming a terrorist. This is done by identifying certain radicalizing elements, societal and personal, that may act as tipping points in the process of an individual embracing terrorism. The paper begins with a

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<sup>2</sup> João Ricardo Faria and Daniel G. Arce M, “Terror Support and Recruitment,” *Defence and Peace Economics* 16, no. 4 (August 2005), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Rex A. Hudson. *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?* Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, September 1999, 43, 60.

discussion of the differences between terrorism in general, religious terrorism, and jihadi terrorism. A history of al Qaeda and what separates al Qaeda from other religious and jihadi organizations follows. Next, the paper outlines al Qaeda recruitment. In particular, it examines who these individuals are (based on demographic information and psychological factors), why these individuals are recruited, and what the pre-cursor conditions are for an individual to embrace terrorism. This is followed by a discussion of where these individuals are recruited. The paper concludes with an examination of the methods used by recruiters to attract potential jihadists into their organization.

### **Global Jihad in the Terrorist Context**

For the purposes of this paper, the official definition of terrorism employed by the U.S. government is utilized. This definition describes terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated, violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”<sup>4</sup> International terrorism is “terrorism involving the territory or the citizens of more than one country.”<sup>5</sup> A terrorist group is “any group that practices, or has significant subgroups that practice international terrorism.”<sup>6</sup>

Religious terrorism differs from other forms of terrorism because, as Bruce Hoffman observes, it is:

motivated either in whole or in part by religious imperative, where violence is regarded by its practitioners as a divine duty or sacramental act, emphasizing markedly different means of legitimation and justification than that committed by secular terrorists, and these

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<sup>4</sup> Title 22 of the U.S. Code, Section 2656f.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

distinguishing features lead, in turn, to yet greater bloodshed and destruction.<sup>7</sup>

This paper focuses, nonetheless, specifically on jihadi terrorism. Individuals that sacrifice their lives in what they believe to be execution of jihad are “martyrs.”<sup>8</sup> The scale that jihad has reached sets jihadi terrorism apart from other forms of religious terrorism.<sup>9</sup> Other religious organizations and movements that practice terrorism tend to keep their focus localized and rarely attack others from outside their area of interest. As David Rapoport notes, “every previous terrorist organization, including Islamic groups, drew its recruits from a single national base.”<sup>10</sup> The Sikhs, for instance, keep their attacks and their motives in or near India.<sup>11</sup> Even Hamas, one of the more lethal Islamic groups currently operating, does not share many of al Qaeda’s aims or scale:

Unlike Hamas, however, al-Qaeda draws its membership from the transnational community of Muslim believers, not from a single country. Also, unlike Hamas, while al-Qaeda focuses principally on a particular territory (the Arabian Peninsula), the group also emphasizes grievances of Muslims in multiple countries and seeks to establish Islamic regimes in all of them.<sup>12</sup>

Al Qaeda does not stay localized and does not keep its attacks, aims, or ideology isolated to one area. Al Qaeda and its affiliate groups have, like their ideology, gone global.<sup>13</sup> As

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<sup>7</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 83.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003), 38.

<sup>9</sup> David C. Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes eds., in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 86.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), 51.

<sup>13</sup> Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin. “The Terror,” *Survival* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2001-2002), 9.

Rapoport notes, religious terrorism has, in recent years, become the biggest terror threat and “Islam is at the heart of the wave.”<sup>14</sup>

These jihadists “agree with bin Laden that Islam is in mortal danger from the hostile West led by the United States.”<sup>15</sup> As jihadists, they believe they are taking their rightful place as defenders of the faith. Bin Laden and the jihadi terrorist movement see disunity in the Muslim world as the cause behind Islamic vulnerability.<sup>16</sup> Because Islam is fractured along ethnic, national, and sectarian lines, it is difficult to unite the faithful into a global movement. These jihadists see the common hatred of the United States and the West a catalyst that could unite Islam.<sup>17</sup> And it is this trans-continental clash that fuels modern-day jihadi terrorism’s global reach.

## **Al Qaeda**

### *Historical Background*

Al Qaeda, or “the base,” is a transnational jihadi terrorist organization. The foundation of the organization dates back to the Soviet Afghan War (1979-1989). A wealthy Saudi citizen by the name of Osama bin Laden had traveled to Afghanistan to fight the invasion of the Soviet “infidels” into Muslim lands. While in Afghanistan, bin Laden amassed widespread support among other Arabs who had traveled to Afghanistan for jihad. During this time, bin Laden met and began coordinating his operations with Egyptian doctor Ayman al Zawahiri, who was the head of Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Both men had

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>15</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, *Unconquerable Nation: Knowing Our Enemy Strengthening Ourselves* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006), 75.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

found inspiration in the scholarly writings of Sayid Qutb. Educated in the U.S., Qutb expressed his disdain and disgust with American and Western culture in his writings. Bin Laden and Zawahiri merged their organizations to form al Qaeda around 1999.<sup>18</sup> The initial membership of al Qaeda consisted of the veteran mujahadeen who had fought with bin Laden in Afghanistan. The Arab Afghan fighters came to embrace jihad and martyrdom as the ultimate sacrifice for Islam and Allah. This notion of sacrifice helped shape the al Qaeda ideology for future jihadists.

Following the war, bin Laden offered the mujahadeen's services to the Saudis when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990.<sup>19</sup> His overtures, however, were rebuffed, as the Saudis looked to the United States for help. The fact that the Saudis would turn to the Americans for help instead of relying on men who had fought the Soviets was a great insult to bin Laden, and it would ultimately prove to be one of the driving forces behind his hatred.<sup>20</sup> His criticisms of the Saudi Royal family led to the revocation of his Saudi citizenship, forcing bin Laden into exile.<sup>21</sup> Following this event, bin Laden and his family moved to Afghanistan, and then later to Sudan.<sup>22</sup>

While in Sudan, bin Laden made a number of local contacts and used his family's wealth to fund local businesses and other ventures. Bin Laden left Sudan in 1996 when the Clinton administration put pressure on the regime in Khartoum, which until then had

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2002), 172.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9-11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 155.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Jerrold M. Post, "When Hatred Is Bred in the Bone: Psycho-Cultural Foundations of Contemporary Terrorism," *Political Psychology* 26, no. 4 (August 2005), 621.

<sup>22</sup> Wright, 165.

been harboring him.<sup>23</sup> Bin Laden then returned to Afghanistan where he was given refuge by the ruling Taliban.<sup>24</sup> The Taliban regime was largely comprised of ethnically Pashtun men who had been educated in Pakistani madrassas and shared bin Laden's extremist view of Islam.<sup>25</sup> Following the Soviet withdrawal and the collapse of the communist leaning government in Kabul, a civil war erupted.<sup>26</sup> The Taliban rose to power in 1996 and ruled Afghanistan until 2001, when they were overthrown by the U.S. in *Operation Enduring Freedom*.<sup>27</sup>

During his years in Afghanistan, bin Laden established training camps in Afghanistan and began funding other jihadi groups around the world. Throughout the 1990s, the jihadi movement took root in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

In addition to the attacks of September 11, 2001, al Qaeda has been linked to a number of other well known terrorist attacks: the Khobar Tower bombing in Saudi Arabia in June 1996; the embassy bombings, in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in August 1998; the bombing of the *U.S.S. Cole* off the coast of Yemen in October 2000; and the bombings in Madrid, Spain, in March 2004, and London, England,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>24</sup> *Conflict History of Afghanistan*, International Crisis Group, March 2006. Available at: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict\\_search&l=1&t=1&c\\_country=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict_search&l=1&t=1&c_country=1) .

<sup>25</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad and Daniel Byman, "Afghanistan: The Consolidation of a Rogue State," *The Washington Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2000), 68.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>27</sup> Barnett R. Rubin and Andrea Armstrong, "Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan," *World Policy Journal* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 31.

in July 2005.<sup>28</sup> Al Qaeda affiliate groups have also been linked to terrorist attacks in Indonesia, Chechnya, Kashmir, Algeria, Morocco, Russia, Somalia, and the Philippines.<sup>29</sup> Presently it is estimated that al Qaeda has a presence in over 60 countries.<sup>30</sup>

### *What Sets Al Qaeda Apart from Other Terrorist/Jihadi Groups?*

Because al Qaeda is global, it does not behave like other terrorist organizations with a more localized focus. The disconnect between the al Qaeda strata allows individual cells to function autonomously and with little oversight. The decentralization of al Qaeda has served the organization well in several ways.<sup>31</sup> First, the affiliate groups operate on their own with their own specific sets of priorities. They are not bound to one group or one man, but are completely self-reliant in shaping their group specific mission.<sup>32</sup> Second, the diffusion of al Qaeda as an ideology in itself has become its best recruitment tool.

Because the movement is now global, the pool of potential recruits has grown exponentially. Third, the decentralization and the global spread of the movement has been its recipe for success.<sup>33</sup> Removal of a single cell will not necessarily destroy the organization. Nor will decapitating the leadership likely end this well-entrenched jihadi terrorist movement.

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<sup>28</sup> Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, 198-205; and Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Next Attack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting It Right* (New York: Times Books, 2005), 3, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, 199-205; and Benjamin and Simon, *The Next Attack*, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Susan E. Rice, "The Threat of Global Poverty," *The National Interest* no. 83 (Spring 2006), 79.

<sup>31</sup> Robert J. Bunker and Matt Begert, "Operational Combat Analysis of the Al Qaeda Network," *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement* 11, no. 2 (Winter 2002), 329.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

While the strategic goals promulgated through al Qaeda's ideology are generally the same, the immediate tactical goals of individual affiliate groups often differ:

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan focuses largely on Uzbekistan and to a lesser degree on Central Asia – and not on the struggle against America. The Taliban in Afghanistan and Jemaat Islamiyyah in Indonesia are concerned about the penetration of Western popular culture, as suggested by its attack on the Bali discotheque.<sup>34</sup>

Al Qaeda now has influence in most areas of the world. Al Qaeda affiliate groups are more likely to focus on their region than on others. Based on the diffuse nature of al Qaeda and its ideology, recruitment will follow these patterns. Because al Qaeda is transnational, recruitment will derive from various ethnicities, nationalities, and cultural backgrounds. The jihadi groups that al Qaeda is affiliated with are all united to some degree based on the shared ideology of jihad and political Islam:

Al Qaeda recruitment rhetoric emphasizes alliance politics among separate national groups, not the construction of a transnational network to spread Islamic fundamentalism or in opposition to democracy in general.<sup>35</sup>

We already know that al Qaeda has been active in Western Europe, the Balkans, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, North Africa, and Africa. Moreover, there has been a large terrorist migration to these areas.<sup>36</sup> The fact that al Qaeda is no longer centralized in one area therefore makes it all the more difficult to track.

While there have been many terrorist organizations that have been operational for decades, such as the FARC, the LTTE, and the IRA, none of these groups have amassed the level and scale of support that al Qaeda has achieved. Just as most other popular

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<sup>34</sup> Daniel Byman, "Al Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand Our Enemy?" *World Politics* 56, no. 1 (October 2003), 149.

<sup>35</sup> Pape, 117.

<sup>36</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 286-287.

movements, al Qaeda has drawn a substantial amount of support. It is this support that has allowed al Qaeda to grow and mutate.

More than likely, the LTTE does not recruit in North Africa and the FARC is not concerned with Southeast Asia.<sup>37</sup> Al Qaeda, on the other hand, has grown beyond its original ideological and geographic core to encompass continents, not just states.<sup>38</sup> Hence, their recruits have widely different backgrounds, depending on the region in which they are operating. It is this transnational evolution that has diluted al Qaeda membership. After all, al Qaeda recruits are no longer coming from one specific locale, let alone a specific continent.<sup>39</sup> The international community is no longer dealing with the multi-headed Hydra as suggested by the popular analogy.<sup>40</sup> This is a new beast entirely.

### **Characteristics of Foot Soldiers**

Stewart Bell writes:

Terrorist recruiters know what to look for – young men who stand out in mosques and schools, who are devout, intelligent and have skills to offer ... the role of the recruiter is to be a talent scout.<sup>41</sup>

One of the best ways to understand a terrorist group is to know who is filling its ranks, why they are there, and how they became terrorists. While it is difficult to establish a pattern because many terrorists do not fit into any accepted mold or profile, it is still important to understand just who makes up this recruitment pool. By examining who

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<sup>37</sup> This does not include diaspora populations.

<sup>38</sup> Byman, 155-156.

<sup>39</sup> Rapoport, "Four Waves," 64.

<sup>40</sup> Bunker and Begert, 329.

<sup>41</sup> Stewart Bell, *The Martyr's Oath* (Ontario: John Wiley and Sons, 2005), 49.

these groups target and why they target them, we can obtain a better understanding of the pathology behind these groups and the individuals they employ.

As Jeff Victoroff noted, “any effort to uncover the ‘terrorist mind’ will more likely result in uncovering a spectrum of terrorist minds.”<sup>42</sup> The diversity of these groups and the people they recruit dispel most preconceived notions of who these individuals are and what they have in common. What can be deduced from terrorist profiling is not that all terrorists are different, but that many terrorists have group and ideology specific types that organizations seek in individual recruits.

Instead of assuming that all terrorists are different and thus can not be profiled, a look at the groups themselves may shed new light on who is being recruited and why.<sup>43</sup> Different groups may place different values on who is an ideal recruit.<sup>44</sup> What some groups may consider to be an asset, others may consider ineffectual or even a liability. Aum Shinrikyo, for example, recruited people from the biotech and medical industries because they needed a certain level of expertise to engineer the sarin gas for their attacks in the Tokyo subway in 1995.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, while a terrorist profile may be inaccurate in identifying terrorist types based on varying and often contrasting backgrounds, there may be some traits that many of these individuals have in common that drives them towards terrorism. This section discusses the personal background of the al Qaeda foot soldier based on demographic information and psychological factors.

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<sup>42</sup> Jeff Victoroff, “The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 1 (February 2005), 7.

<sup>43</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Sources of Contemporary Terrorism,” in Cronin and Ludes, eds., 20-27.

<sup>44</sup> Jerrold Post, “The Radical Group in Context 1: An Integrated Framework for the Analysis of Group Risk for Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25, no. 2 (April 2002), 90.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

### *Demographic Breakdown*

As has been stated before, there really is no specific profile that can be used to identify terrorists and potential terrorists. Instead we have generalizations, assumptions, and broad conclusions, many of which are compiled after the fact. What we have learned about studying jihadi terrorists, and al Qaeda in particular, is that these terrorists literally come from all walks of life.<sup>46</sup> The following list is a demographic breakdown pertinent to the al Qaeda foot soldier: religion, sex, age, marital status, economic background, and level of education.

First, regardless of the nationality and ethnicity of the recruit, he is first and foremost a Muslim. His devotion to Islam will supersede all other factors that have formed his identity.<sup>47</sup> As a devout Muslim, he believes he must defend Islam at any cost.<sup>48</sup>

Second, most jihadi terrorists, including operatives of al Qaeda and its affiliate groups, are male – most but not all, as the jihadi movement in Chechnya uses women in their suicide missions.<sup>49</sup> Palestinian women have also participated in suicide missions. But overall, most, if not all, al Qaeda recruits are men.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jenkins, 92.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Jenkins, 70.

<sup>49</sup> Anne Nivat, “The Black Widows,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28, no. 5 (September 2005), 413.

<sup>50</sup> I am excluding the role of women as a support network. Many terrorist organizations use women for purposes of assisting the other members, but rarely as active participants in attacks. This is however gradually changing.

Third, jihadi terrorists tend to be recruited as young adults. “Most are young. As is done in all armies, jihadist recruiters target impressionable adolescents and men in their twenties.”<sup>51</sup> In al Qaeda and in many other terrorist organizations and movements, the foot soldiers are younger than the leaders and heads of the organization.<sup>52</sup> The 9/11 hijackers’ ages “range[d] from 28-33.”<sup>53</sup> Given that the usual time frame from recruitment through indoctrination and training can last several years, some of these men were first recruited in their mid to late twenties.<sup>54</sup>

Fourth, according to Marc Sageman, “three-fourths of al-Qaida terrorists are young, married men, and two-thirds of them have children, often several.”<sup>55</sup> For many Wahhabists, a terrorist with a spouse and children has fulfilled his Muslim responsibilities.<sup>56</sup> The number of married al Qaeda terrorists stands in stark contrast to the number of unmarried Palestinian and Lebanese terrorists.<sup>57</sup>

Fifth, recruits typically are in good physical condition.<sup>58</sup> Once recruited, an individual selected for jihad will most likely attend one of the training camps. In addition to religious education, these recruits will undergo strenuous physical activity and combat training. They will also receive lessons in such skills as bomb making, weapons training,

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<sup>51</sup> Jenkins, 92.

<sup>52</sup> Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want* (New York: Random House, 2006), 46.

<sup>53</sup> Post, “When Hatred Is Bred,” 630.

<sup>54</sup> Jenkins, 91.

<sup>55</sup> Carolee Walker, “Most al Qaeda Members are Married, Educated, Expert Says,” *International Information Program*, August 30, 2006. Available at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060830162450bcreklaw3.895205e-02>

<sup>56</sup> Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 5 (June 2006), 477.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Hudson, 51; and Jenkins, 92.

and, if necessary, forging documents, eluding counter measures, gathering intelligence, and computing.<sup>59</sup>

Sixth, many individual recruits come from varying economic circumstances. The lower level foot soldiers of al Qaeda do not show any consistencies in terms of their personal or family wealth. Some are poor, some are wealthy. Some grew up in affluence, while others were raised in poverty. Some are employed, others are not. There is a tendency, however, for al Qaeda to attract members with some degree of financial stability.<sup>60</sup>

Seventh, al Qaeda tends to attract individuals with a high degree of intelligence and advanced levels of education.<sup>61</sup> Again, much of the data is varied. Some have university level degrees, while others have only the most basic education that rarely goes beyond the high school level.<sup>62</sup> Some individuals are recruited specifically for their intelligence or for their knowledge in a particular area.<sup>63</sup> For those terrorists who do have advanced levels of education, many have degrees in science and technology related fields, such as medicine, computer science, or engineering.<sup>64</sup>

### *Psychological Factors*

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<sup>59</sup> Michael Kenney, "How Terrorists Learn," in James J. F. Forest, ed., *Teaching Terror: Strategic and Tactical Learning in the Terrorist World* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 35, 40-42. They will also have to learn how to blend in to their surroundings without raising any suspicions. Knowledge of certain cultural norms is, therefore, important.

<sup>60</sup> Nick Fielding, "Al-Qaeda Lures Middle Class to Join its Ranks," *Sunday Times*, April 3, 2005, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Richardson, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Jenkins, 92.

<sup>63</sup> Post, "The Radical Group 1," 91.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Scapegoat," *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 118.

In general, al Qaeda, and other terrorist organizations for that matter, do not recruit mentally unbalanced individuals.<sup>65</sup> In fact, a number of studies have concluded that “terrorists rarely meet the psychiatric criteria for insanity.”<sup>66</sup> While it is easy to label terrorists as such based on their actions, there is overwhelming evidence that disproves that assumption.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, most terrorist organizations do not accept mentally unstable recruits as “they represent a security risk.”<sup>68</sup> Unstable individuals are more difficult to control and are unpredictable, making them unreliable and less likely to execute a successful attack.

According to Rueben Vaisman-Tzachor:

The narcissistic character organization, the most likely and the most widely accepted psychological configuration, starts with the developmental history of a person, which includes one’s psychological development into an emotionally self sufficient individual.<sup>69</sup>

He also goes on to state that narcissists are “easily recruitable based on the promise of specialness and immortality, which fit into the sense of self-importance.”<sup>70</sup> For the individual who fits these criteria, the act of being recruited might be a sign of their own sense of importance and entitlement. Because of the perception of terrorists as heroes, these individuals are having their own feelings validated.

Narcissism is not the only psychological disorder that people have attributed to terrorist behavior. Paranoia has been discussed as another possible explanation. One

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<sup>65</sup> Post, “The Radical Group 1,” 91.

<sup>66</sup> Victoroff, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Pape, 210.

<sup>68</sup> Post, “When Hatred Is Bred,” 616-617.

<sup>69</sup> Reuben Vaisman-Tzachor “Psychological Profiles of Terrorists,” *Forensic Examiner* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 13.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

position, taken by Jerrold Post, as described in Jeff Victoroff's "The Mind of the Terrorist," posits:

The salient feature of terrorist psychology is projection, an infantile defense that assigns intolerable internal feelings to an external object when an individual who has grown up with a damaged self concept idealizes the good self and splits out the bad self.<sup>71</sup>

This particular theory implies that the terrorist has a certain level of displacement. This "projection" could help explain terrorism, as the individual focuses his aggression and frustration on others. Because these individuals are living in their own reality in terms of what is perceived as opposed to what is real, the individual may not be able to differentiate between external assault and internal displacement. "Post's paranoia theory offers a developmental model that explains not only why only a minority of individuals with political grievances turns to terrorism but also why terrorists kill those who do not appear to constitute an imminent threat."<sup>72</sup>

While there are a number of psychological assessments of terrorists that seek to explain terrorist behavior, the fact that so many studies and such varying examples exist, suggests that there really is no single psychological explanation for terrorism. There may be a general consensus that some sort of psychological pathology is present in the terrorist mind or personality. Yet, there is no consensus as to which specific pathology is at work.

While a definitive diagnosis that characterizes terrorist psychopathology is difficult to establish, there are common elements to the terrorist mindset that many jihadi members exhibit. First, "they tend to be true believers who see the world in black and

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<sup>71</sup> Victoroff, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 24.

white, us versus them.”<sup>73</sup> Second, al Qaeda recruits will have a deep hatred for the West and the United States in particular.<sup>74</sup> Third, recruits will share the sense of humiliation and injustice that is a common feeling in the Middle East.<sup>75</sup> This “humiliation by proxy,” as Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon describe it, has become one of the prime motivators for many jihadis.<sup>76</sup> Their turning to terrorism is a way to enact revenge on those they feel are responsible for this humiliation and injustice. Fourth, despite their educational and financial background, they will feel alienated from society.<sup>77</sup> It is this disenfranchised segment of the population that will be more susceptible to recruitment.<sup>78</sup>

### **Radicalizing Factors That Drive an Individual to Embrace Terrorism**

Examining the root causes of terrorism is important to understanding the foundations of terror groups. These root causes are also directly correlated to the goals of these terrorist groups. However, in order to really understand just what makes these groups “tick” and why they are so attractive to certain people, understanding the root causes at the individual level is just as important. Dissecting the reasons why individuals join terrorist organizations is key to understanding the organization itself.

These root causes often serve as radicalizing factors for the individual. They are some of the reasons that drive the individual to embrace terrorism and violence. These “justifications,” in turn, form the ideology of the organization and the movement. The

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>74</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 288-289.

<sup>75</sup> Paul B. Davis, “The Terrorist Mentality,” *Cerebrum: The Dana Forum in Brain Science* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2001), 1.

<sup>76</sup> Benjamin and Simon, *The Next Attack*, 74.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>78</sup> Post, “When Hatred Is Bred,” 628.

factors are widely considered to be the leading radicalizers of individual terrorists.<sup>79</sup> Not all are needed to drive a person to terrorism, however. In some cases, it only takes one.

The following section details the motivating factors that might drive an individual to terrorism. First, there is a social aspect of terrorism that attracts individuals. The social dynamic of the terrorist organization provides a communal bonding structure for these individuals. Second, there is a communal bond in history, especially historical grievance. Third, there is political unrest. Many countries in the Muslim world are ruled by authoritarian governments. For many jihadi terrorists, the terrorist act may be interpreted as a form of political action. Fourth, for many Muslims, a motivating factor to embrace jihad relates to the personal appeal of Osama bin Laden. The cult of personality has been strong in previous ideological movements. The power that bin Laden has to inspire the masses into action can not be overstated. Fifth, religion provides the grandest justification for jihadi terrorism. Religion is, after all, the common denominator that unites all jihadists across the globe.

### *Social*

A terrorist organization, apart from the violence, is really like any other social group. It has its own operational dynamic, structure, and set of social norms. It provides an individual a social outlet in which he may interact with other like minded people. Group formation is characteristically formed around a shared ethos or interest.<sup>80</sup> For the terrorist group, that ethos or interest is terror and violence as a way to fight perceived injustice

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<sup>79</sup> Hudson, 15.

<sup>80</sup> Jeffrey Seul, "Ours is the Way of God: Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 5 (September 1999), 554-556.

and defend its way of life. The terrorist group provides an individual a ready-made social network.

The notion of community is very strong in the Muslim world.<sup>81</sup> Unlike in the West, there is much less of an emphasis on the individual as a person and more on the individual as part of the community. This communal bonding does help explain the general mindset in many areas, including how individuals interact with each other and how they perceive the West. For those individuals who turn to terrorism, they are not necessarily embracing violence for what has been done to them specifically, but for what has been done to their people.<sup>82</sup> They do not make the distinction between themselves and their communities or even their religious brethren across the globe:

With the transnational Muslim identity comes a sense of universal grievance. The local and global can no longer be distinguished. Now, the sufferings of Muslims everywhere have become even more palpably the responsibility of every Muslim.<sup>83</sup>

They have internalized an external assault (perceived or otherwise) on their community, thus designating themselves the recipient of this assault. This is not to suggest, of course, that people turn to terrorism out of boredom or lack of social skills. What it does suggest is that for certain individuals who live in circumstances where the prospect for communal action and social bonding may be restricted, the terrorist organization may provide the individual a needed outlet:

The hate mongering leader plays a crucial organizing role, provides a “sense making” explanation for what has gone wrong in their lives, identifying the external enemy as the cause, as well as drawing together into a collective identity otherwise disparate individuals who may be

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<sup>81</sup> Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 222-224.

<sup>82</sup> Benjamin and Simon, *The Next Attack*, 86.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

discontented and aggrieved, but who, without the powerful presence of a leader, will remain isolated and individually aggrieved.<sup>84</sup>

This social network is attractive to many people. In certain areas where conflict and instability are common, the terrorist organization gives the individual a social construct that may be lacking. This acts as a beacon for terrorist recruitment. The group embraces the recruit as much as the recruit embraces the terrorist ideology. This provides the recruit with the structure to act for a purpose greater than his own.<sup>85</sup> The individual thus surrenders his own identity to that of the group.<sup>86</sup> Survival of the group and the cause takes precedence over the individual existence.

This loss of individual identity can be attractive to certain people. What al Qaeda and other groups provide for their recruits is a bonding structure and forum for action.<sup>87</sup> While it is not hard to find anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiment in the world these days, the number of people who are actually willing to take that extra step into violence may not be as large as many people think. Al Qaeda and bin Laden have many sympathizers around the world.<sup>88</sup> But sympathy and support do not always correlate with action. For the many that do support bin Laden and the al Qaeda ideology, most stop short of actually doing anything about it, being more content to watch from the sidelines.<sup>89</sup> For those who do take that extra step, al Qaeda brings together those individuals who are willing to take that step collectively. For the disenfranchised that feel displaced from society or who want to act but are not able to act individually, the terrorist

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<sup>84</sup> Post, "When Hatred Is Bred," 622.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 629.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Jenkins, 63.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why The West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2004), 19.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 65.

group provides that justification for action that recruits may need.<sup>90</sup> In the case of al Qaeda, it welcomes individuals to the global jihad. The existence of al Qaeda serves to validate the animosity and frustration that is pervasive in the Muslim world.<sup>91</sup> For some of the more destitute areas of the globe, al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations give the recruits a sense of hope that governments and legitimate social structures can not.<sup>92</sup>

### *Historical*

What many people in the West fail to realize is that a shared sense of history is just one of the parts of the puzzle that constitutes identity in the developing world.<sup>93</sup> In areas like the Middle East, centuries old events like the Crusades might as well have happened last week.<sup>94</sup> This event, along with the effects of colonialism, humiliating military losses to Israel, oppressive and violent regimes in the region, the cultural assault of the West, and the presence of the United States in the land of Islam, have all contributed to the historical grievances that are pervasive in the region.

What the historical record shows to people in the Middle East and the Islamic world is a centuries long continuum of humiliation and subjugation at the hands of outside powers.<sup>95</sup> Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the Muslim world was increasingly vulnerable to outside forces.<sup>96</sup> Despite the fact that

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<sup>90</sup> Post, "When Hatred Is Bred," 629.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 622.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 633.

<sup>93</sup> Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, xix.

<sup>94</sup> Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies Eyes*, 196-197.

<sup>95</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 158.

<sup>96</sup> Roger Owen, *State Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

societies in the Middle East (and other areas of the world with an Islamic extremist presence) have different individual histories, many of these societies share a deep sense of anger and frustration against their governments and the West. This shared historical grievance unites fractured historical events and unites the Muslim world under the banner of common hatred. Even though the foundations of states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria, for example, are all rooted in differing historical contexts and sequences of events, these populations are all fueled by the same anger and sense of injustice. This common grievance serves as another channel through which an individual can connect with his community, the greater Middle East, and the Muslim world.

The al Qaeda recruit need not look that far back into history to find a significant event that feeds his anger and hatred. For many al Qaeda recruits now and in the future, one of the most important historical events to shape the jihadi mentality and radicalize their beliefs is the one event that laid the ground work for al Qaeda in the first place: the Soviet Afghan War.<sup>97</sup> The Soviet Afghan War can be seen as the first modern battle in a long jihad waged against the “infidels.” The Arabs who went to Afghanistan were fighting the Soviets on behalf of Afghan Muslims.<sup>98</sup> For many of today’s fighters, while the location and scale of the war have changed, the mission has not.

At the end of the Soviet Afghan War, there was a major shift in strategy.<sup>99</sup> War was being waged against the “near” enemy, the apostate governments of the Muslim world.<sup>100</sup> Then the focus shifted to the “far” enemy, the “infidels” and the West.<sup>101</sup> While

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<sup>97</sup> Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 84-85.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-83.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

the “near” enemy has not been forgotten, the emphasis on targeting Muslim governments was expanded to include anyone who posed a threat to Islam.<sup>102</sup> It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that, for recruits, the jihad that started with the Soviet invasion did not end with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The recruits are simply taking up arms against the same enemy against whom their forefathers had fought. The details may have changed, but the stimulus for action has not. With the end of the Afghan war came the dispersion of a large number of veterans who were only too happy to spread the world wide message of jihad to future generations.<sup>103</sup> This is evident by the number of veterans who are active in recruiting and training future terrorists.<sup>104</sup>

For the al Qaeda recruit, historical grievance is one of the factors that unites him to other recruits. It supersedes citizenship and ethnicity, and reinforces the bond that keeps al Qaeda united. Regardless of a recruit’s origin and ethnicity, he will be able to relate to other recruits who have experienced similar grievances in their own state and historical record.

### *Political*

The political landscape is another area that breeds terrorism and incites violence. The political aspects that drive an individual to terrorism come from various internal and external forces. Many of the internal factors that contribute to an individual’s radicalization start at the local level, as this environment is closer and more immediate in influencing individual development. In many parts of the world that have a more

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<sup>101</sup> Byman, 146.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Jenkins, 86.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

traditionalist society, there is still a strong tribal presence that supersedes that of state government.<sup>105</sup> For those people living in these areas, the tribal structure is what keeps the fabric of their society together. The introduction of Western culture and ideas is seen as chipping away at this traditional way of life.<sup>106</sup> The failure of governments to prevent this modern intrusion is perceived as an attack on the traditional society, with leaders seen as complicit in society's demise.<sup>107</sup> For the individual, this becomes a rallying point from which to strike back at the forces of modernization, the West, and accommodating governments.<sup>108</sup> For jihadi groups, the main point of contention here is that many of these governments are apostate, meaning they are secular in their rule and have cooperated to some degree with the United States. "In the eyes of the jihadists, apostate regimes in many countries have become American puppets joining in the oppression of true Muslims."<sup>109</sup> Many of these governments are also highly oppressive regimes which do not allow political dissent amongst their populations.

The other area of politics that generates anger is international politics, specifically how state governments interact with the United States and the West. This has been a source of much frustration, particularly in the Middle East. What fuels the anger is how certain states have cooperated with the U.S. and the West.<sup>110</sup> For states like Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf nations, much of the political unrest seen in their societies derives from the American presence these governments have allowed within their borders. For instance, that the Saudi royal family allows "infidels" in its country, the home to the two

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<sup>105</sup> Barber, 232.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>107</sup> Lewis, *Crisis of Islam*, 134.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>109</sup> Jenkins, 75.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 134.

holiest sites in Islam, is seen by many Muslims as an offense to Islam.<sup>111</sup> This relationship has not only caused a number of problems for the U.S. and the Saudis, but for the neighboring states as well, which must deal with their own domestic issues as well as any transborder spillover effect from this “desecration.” Because many of these states adopt the issues of their neighbors, a slight against one is seen as a slight against all. The Saudi allowance of Americans into the Holy Land is seen, therefore, as an insult and disgrace to Muslims.

Such state policies may push people to embrace violence.<sup>112</sup> Individuals may see terrorism as the only means of political participatory action. Because many of these states are oppressive regimes that prohibit open dissent, joining a terrorist group (or any organization that utilizes political violence for that matter) may be seen as the only way for an oppressed person to be active in political affairs. The terrorist organization therefore acts not only as a social network, but also as a political activist group. This is another way that the individual can feel as if he is part of something stable in an otherwise chaotic environment. Terrorism also provides the individual the opportunity to avenge shame and disgrace: “humiliation seems plausible as the root of an urge to retaliate against political entities that are perceived to be responsible.”<sup>113</sup>

The politicizing and “cooking” of Iraqi civilian deaths statistics since the U.S. invasion in 2003 provides a prominent example of how international politics fuels the outrage many Muslims feel toward the policies of their governments and the actions of outside intervening forces. According to Nancy Youssef, the Iraqi death statistics, as

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<sup>111</sup> Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, 115-116.

<sup>112</sup> Jenkins, 78.

<sup>113</sup> Victoroff, 29.

measured by the Bush administration, are being calibrated to not include the number of deaths from car bombings and other explosive related fatalities.<sup>114</sup> The Bush administration is doing this to prove that the recent American troop surge is working, as evidenced by a decrease in the death toll.<sup>115</sup> The data, however, are being manipulated to omit statistics that would more than likely prove the surge is in fact not working.<sup>116</sup> “Iraq Body Count, a private group that relies on published reports estimates the civilian death toll for the war between 62, 400 and 68, 430.”<sup>117</sup> The number of civilian deaths in Iraq and other places like Afghanistan and Pakistan, have become a “political football” on both sides of the War on Terror. The American side downplays the numbers and assigns blame on al Qaeda and Sunni insurgent group. The extremist side blames the American military, American policy, and the Maliki government in Iraq. These civilian deaths, or “collateral damage” as the Bush administration calls them, are inspiring more jihadi terrorists. These individuals see their fellow Iraqi and Muslim brothers and sisters killed by “infidel” forces. As will be discussed below, this is validating bin Laden’s claim that America has declared war on Islam.<sup>118</sup>

A second American policy that incites Islamic rage is the incarceration and torture of Muslims at the hands of the “infidels.” Specifically, the images of the Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib and the detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have more than likely increased

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<sup>114</sup> Nancy Youssef, “U.S. Official Exclude Bombs in Touting Drop in Iraq Violence,” *McClatchy Newspapers, Knight Ridder Washington Bureau*, (April 25, 2007).

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Robert H. Reid “U.N. Complains that Iraq Government Withholding Casualty Figures,” *Associated Press*, (April 25, 2007).

<sup>118</sup> “Bin Laden: West Waging a Crusade,” *Al Jazeera.net* (April 25, 2006). Available at: <http://english.aljazeera.net/English/Archive/Archive?ArchiveID=22227>

terrorist recruitment.<sup>119</sup> The images were broadcast globally on television and the internet. The images of Muslims being tortured serves as an individual recruitment motive and al Qaeda propaganda tool.

### *The Cult of Personality*

The cult of personality is the phenomenon in which “a charismatic leader ... increasingly becomes an object of worship as the general principles that may have originally sustained the group lose their power.”<sup>120</sup> The charismatic draw of the individual leaders of groups may “inspire totalistic devotion in followers.”<sup>121</sup> For the individual, the figure-heads are often perceived as being larger-than-life. Their lives are glorified and their ideas are treated as unequivocal truth. These figures or leaders may instruct their followers to act on their behalf or, in the case of Osama bin Laden, they may merely inspire these acts.

Osama bin Laden has done for jihadi terrorism what Adolf Hitler did for National Socialism.<sup>122</sup> Many people in the Muslim and Arab world admire bin Laden, even if they disagree with his tactics.<sup>123</sup> For the world’s Muslim population, bin Laden is David taking on the U.S. Goliath.<sup>124</sup> Bin Laden has shown people in the Muslim world that it is possible to take on the world’s superpower. And while his success is debatable, the fact that he actually acted is what is most important. Much of bin Laden’s rhetoric is centered

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<sup>119</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 289.

<sup>120</sup> Rick Ross, “Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda,” *The Changing Age of Cults, Cult Education and Recovery*, (November 2001) Available at: <http://www.culteducation.com/binladen.html>.

<sup>121</sup> Loretta S. Wilson and Susan Kwileck, “Are These People Crazy or What? A Rational Choice Interpretation of Cults and Charisma,” *Humanomics* 19, no. 1/2 (2003), 30.

<sup>122</sup> Ross.

<sup>123</sup> Carnes Lord, “Psychological-Political Instruments,” in Cronin and Ludes, eds., 226.

<sup>124</sup> Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris*, 18.

on the U.S. being a “paper tiger.”<sup>125</sup> He seems to be getting his point across, a point that is not lost on millions of people – Muslims and non-Muslims alike – the world over.

The bin Laden family is one of the wealthiest families in Saudi Arabia.<sup>126</sup> Yet, here is a man who has turned his back on the family fortune and a life of luxury, to live in a cave in the mountains.<sup>127</sup> Bin Laden has purposefully taken on this ascetic lifestyle, believing it makes him a better Muslim.<sup>128</sup> This lifestyle is closer to that of the average Muslim (albeit their’s is not necessarily by choice). This makes it easier to relate to bin Laden not just as a person, but as an authority figure. When bin Laden calls for jihad, his request does not fall on deaf ears. Turning his back on a life of privilege for a life of sacrifice to Islam gives bin Laden legitimacy. This, in turn, provides the individual recruit with a person with whom to identify and with an ideology to embrace.

For many people bin Laden is living the life of a true Muslim. Whatever direction al Qaeda follows, Osama bin Laden will always be the face of al Qaeda and the voice for jihadi terrorism. Bin Laden himself is not saying anything that other people have not said before.<sup>129</sup> It is his delivery and his actions that have set him apart. What bin Laden has done, that most others have not, is to effectively capitalize on the virulent hatred towards the West and actually translate it into action. Bin Laden showed the Muslim world that the U.S. is vulnerable.<sup>130</sup> Finding people in the Middle East who hate America is easy.

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<sup>125</sup> Bruce Hoffman, “The Leadership Secrets of Osama bin Laden,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 291, no. 3 (April 2003), 27.

<sup>126</sup> Ahmed S Hashin, “The World According to Usama bin Laden,” *Naval War College Review* 54, no. 4 (Autumn 2001), 19.

<sup>127</sup> Jenkins, 71-72.

<sup>128</sup> Wright, 234-235.

<sup>129</sup> Barry Rubin, *The Tragedy of The Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

<sup>130</sup> Byman, 157.

Finding people who are willing to actually do something about it is slightly more difficult. The events of September 11 helped bin Laden win a major battle in the propaganda war for hearts and minds.

### *Religious*

Religion is for many people one of the primary foundations on which they have formed their individual and collective identities:

Religious meaning systems define the contours of the broadest possible range of relationships— to self; to others near and distant, friendly and unfriendly; to the non- human world; to the universe; and to God, or that which one considers ultimately real or true. No other repositories of cultural meaning have historically offered so much in response to the human need to develop a secure identity. Consequently, religion often is at the core of the individual and group identity.<sup>131</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that religion has become one of the biggest factors that may drive an individual towards terrorism. Religion dictates almost every aspect of life in the Muslim world.<sup>132</sup> It is the base around which life in the Middle East circles.<sup>133</sup> Religion for jihadi groups like al Qaeda provides the ideological justification and motivation for their actions.<sup>134</sup> This is appealing to recruits on a number of different levels, as it ties in directly to the radicalizing factors previously discussed.

Similar to the group dynamics and social cohesion that attract recruits to terrorism, religion offers the same refuge for individuals but on a deeper and more

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<sup>131</sup> Seul, 558.

<sup>132</sup> Lewis, *Shaping of the Modern Middle East*, 22.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Susanna Pearce, "Religious Rage: A Quantitative Analysis of The Intensity of Religious Conflict," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 3 (October 2005), 338.

personal level.<sup>135</sup> Islam is truly the one unifying factor that all Muslims do have in common, regardless of where they live. In the Muslim world, this community of believers is called the *umma*.<sup>136</sup> “Muslims have long been encouraged to think of themselves as a unitary community of the faithful, despite their differences in race, ethnicity, and nationality.”<sup>137</sup> Muslims differentiate themselves by the school of thought to which they subscribe. Most Islamic extremists subscribe to Salafism. The Salafist school of thought seeks a return to tradition and pure Islam.<sup>138</sup> This return includes the re-establishment of the caliphate and the implementation of Sharia law.<sup>139</sup> For bin Laden and many other Saudi nationals in al Qaeda, however, they follow Wahhabism. Wahhabism, which got its start in Saudi Arabia, is a Saudi specific form of Salafism.<sup>140</sup> This view has slowly percolated through the jihadi movement, as more and more people began subscribing to this extremist form of Islam and to bin Laden’s world view.<sup>141</sup> This brand of Islam was often spread by Saudi Arabia, which funded various Islamic schools worldwide. These schools taught the Wahhabi doctrine and the teachings of various “clerics” who preached Wahhabism to converts and trainees at the various camps, mosques, and madrassas throughout the world.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> James K Wellman, Jr., and Kyoko Tokuno, “Is Religious Violence Inevitable?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 3 (September 2004), 292.

<sup>136</sup> Benjamin and Simon, *The Next Attack*, 55.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Pape, 106.

<sup>139</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 96.

<sup>140</sup> Pape, 106.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> The term cleric does not necessarily translate into someone with official religious training. Because Islam has no clergy or hierarchy of religious authority, anyone can claim to be a religious scholar. Thus the term cleric can be used loosely. See Richard W. Bulliet, “The Crisis Within Islam,” *Policy* 18, no. 4 (Summer 2002-03), 34, 36. See also Benjamin and Simon, *The Next Attack*, 68.

For many people, Muslim or otherwise, religion provides answers, guidance, and solace. This is one of the reasons why deeply religious individuals will resort to violence to defend their religion. The relationship of the individual to their respective religion is a personal relationship. Therefore, a perceived attack on that religion will have a profound effect on the individual, as that attack is internalized.<sup>143</sup> When the perceived attack is internalized by the individual as an assault on him personally, his recourse might be to defend himself, his community, and his faith.<sup>144</sup> For the jihadi terrorist, this is defensive jihad, given that Islam is seen as being under attack.<sup>145</sup>

Jihad is spoken of as the duty of all Muslims – a duty to defend the faith against those who wish to destroy it.<sup>146</sup> The message and purpose of jihad has been, along with other Islamic doctrines, preached by people who interpret portions of the Koran to justify certain beliefs and practices.<sup>147</sup> These interpretations become the catalysts for action in the name of Allah and on behalf of Muslims. Essentially, what men like Osama bin Laden do is shape and inspire a modern religious army and ideological movement based on their readings of the Koran.<sup>148</sup> Much of the rhetoric that is used by al Qaeda is based on bin Laden's interpretation of the Koran; its true meaning becomes lost in the translation and is irrelevant to the individual.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Seul, 557.

<sup>144</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 289.

<sup>145</sup> Jenkins, 70.

<sup>146</sup> Byman, 147.

<sup>147</sup> Jenkins, 72.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Prime Breeding Grounds for Recruitment**

Knowing why the individual turns to terrorism is only part of the equation. Knowing where they are recruited is equally important. Most people do not wake up one day and decide to become terrorists. Many recruits have been exposed to the terrorist mantra at numerous points in their lives. Palestinian youth, for example, have grown up with the images of martyrdom. For these individuals, suicide terrorism has become a way of life.<sup>150</sup> From an early age, they have come to accept acts of terror as a legitimate form of action. The perception of these actions as honorable and acceptable is learned at an early age. As Louise Richardson noted, “we see them as violating all moral codes in pursuit of power and domination. They see themselves as defending the weak against the strong and punishing the strong for their violation of all moral codes.”<sup>151</sup>

Knowing where the most viable candidates are located is part of the job of the recruiter. Tapping into the ingratiated anger is only the first step. Locating the pool is another. Al Qaeda recruitment is not confined to one particular area, as recruits may be found in many communal settings. This section discusses where recruits are found and why these areas provide viable candidates. This section places particular focus on prisons, madrassas, mosques, and American theaters of operation.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Daphne Burdman, “Education, Indoctrination, and Incitement: Palestinian Children on Their Way to Martyrdom,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 97.

<sup>151</sup> Richardson, 44.

<sup>152</sup> This list provides only a general overview of where recruits may be found. It is not meant to provide a mutually exhaustive list of recruitment locales.

## *Prisons*

Prisons are an ideal place for terrorist recruitment. It is not uncommon for prison inmates to turn to religion during their incarceration. For the potential recruit or the newly converted, Islam provides a social outlet:

In prison, religion offers one of the few officially sanctioned sources of friendship and mutual support. The unintended result is that disconnected, impressionable young men and women become a captive audience for those who espies extremist Islamic dogma. Those imprisoned for petty theft, for selling drugs, or simply for being an illegal alien harbor an animus that makes them ripe for the plucking by Islamic extremists.<sup>153</sup>

Recruitment in American and European prisons could very well be overlooked precisely because they are Western prisons. Because most recruitment is expected to take place overseas in foreign prisons where the population might be predominantly Muslim anyway, it is easy to eschew the rise of radical Islam in the Western penal systems.

Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, and Jose Padilla, the American accused of trying to build a dirty bomb, were both recruited by Islamic outreach programs in prison.<sup>154</sup>

The inmate who turns to Islam may view the embracing of terror as his means of revenge on the society that imprisoned him. As a prisoner and follower of Islam, it is quite possible the individual will adopt the same frustration as Muslims all over the world. As one society keeps him locked up, another will embrace him:

Recruitment of inmates within the prison system will continue to be a problem for correctional institutions throughout the country. Inmates are often ostracized, abandoned by, or isolated from their family and friends, leaving them susceptible to recruitment. Membership in the various

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<sup>153</sup> Ian M. Cuthbertson, "Prisons and the Education of Terrorists," *World Policy Journal* 21, no. 3 (Fall 2004), 18.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

radical groups offer inmates protection, positions of influence and a network they can correspond with both inside and outside of prison.<sup>155</sup>

Prisons often have the unintended consequence of teaching and fostering the crimes they seek to deter. Terrorism is no different. In the UK, for example, IRA prisoners are often interrogated by other inmates for information.<sup>156</sup> This sharing of information serves not only to keep other inmates abreast of the activities of their various groups on the outside, but also to act as a psychological reinforcement for the incarcerated.<sup>157</sup> Knowing what is happening on the outside, be it success or failure, can be a powerful motivator to maintaining terror ties. For those not yet in the group, hearing such stories can at times offer a sense of hope in an otherwise hopeless situation.

### *Madrassas*

Institutions of learning are also prime breeding grounds for terrorist recruitment. The lower levels of education, in particular, are perfect because most of the recruits are young and impressionable. Al Qaeda “members trained in the madrassas are taught early [i.e., 8-10 years of age] to obey religious authority without question.”<sup>158</sup> Because the madrassa system educates many young children, it could be classified in some instances as an incubator of candidates for future recruitment.

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<sup>155</sup> Testimony of John S. Pistole, Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, FBI Before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology, and Homeland Security “Terrorist Recruitment in Prisons and The Recent Arrests Related to Guantanamo Bay Detainees,” (October 14, 2003). Available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress03/pistole101403.htm>.

<sup>156</sup> James J. F. Forest, “Training Camps and Other Center of Learning,” in Forest, ed., 75.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Post, “The Radical Group 1,” 92.

The word “madrassa” means school in Arabic.<sup>159</sup> There are thousands of madrassas worldwide. A significant misconception about madrassas is that most are recruitment centers for terrorists. This is not the case.<sup>160</sup> Only a small percentage of the world’s madrassas actually qualify as being radical or teaching violent jihad. Jessica Stern points out that “Pakistani officials estimate that 10-15 percent of the country’s tens of thousands of madrasahs espouse such extremist ideologies.”<sup>161</sup> The madrassa curriculum is largely determined by its source of funding. The madrassas in Pakistan, for example, are partly state run from the money collected by the *zakat*, or Islamic tithes. Many, nonetheless, receive large amounts of funding from overseas, particularly from Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states.<sup>162</sup> Those madrassas that receive Saudi funding may be more inclined to teach Wahhabism, in contrast to schools that only receive state funding. Because many parents cannot afford to send their children to private schools, madrassas are the best option, as they are free and often provide food and lodging in addition to education.<sup>163</sup>

For those madrassas that do teach radical Islam and violent jihad, the students they teach are likely young and impressionable. This situation creates ready made terrorist candidates who are primed for entry into the movement.<sup>164</sup> The madrassa system is appealing to radical Islamists because the madrassa board decides the educational

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<sup>159</sup> Bergen and Pandey, 119.

<sup>160</sup> Andrew Coulson, “Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World: Is There a Problem? What Can We Do About It?” *Policy Analysis* March 11, 2004, 3.

<sup>161</sup> Jessica Stern, “Pakistan Jihad’s Culture,” *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 6 (November/December 2000), 119.

<sup>162</sup> Husein Haqqani, “Islam’s Medieval Outposts,” *Foreign Policy* no. 133, (November/December 2002), 63.

<sup>163</sup> Coulson, 2-3.

<sup>164</sup> Stern, “Pakistan’s Jihad Culture,” 119.

program.<sup>165</sup> The madrassa curriculum is neither government regulated nor government approved. The clerics who teach are the sole authority. And that authority is rarely questioned.

### *Mosques*

Mosques provide the individual the similar converging structure of socialization and religion.<sup>166</sup> It is a place for Muslims to pray together and interact together. It would therefore make sense that recruitment, by individuals operating in the mosque, is not uncommon in these religious institutions.<sup>167</sup> For the recruiter, the mosque is perfect for identifying possible recruits. By observing the worshippers, recruiters have a better idea of who would be a good candidate based on their behaviors and the degree of their piety.<sup>168</sup> For the recruits, the mosque, like any other religious building, serves as a sanctuary where individuals can practice their faith and interact with other followers. As a social network, the mosque is another gathering point for many people. Not only does it allow people to worship together, it provides a forum for religious discussion and social interaction.

Two Western mosques in particular have become well-known for their extremist views: the Finsbury Park Mosque in London and the al-Farouq Mosque in Brooklyn.<sup>169</sup> These mosques, and others like them, are known conduits for terrorist funding and

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<sup>165</sup> Benjamin and Simon, *Next Attack*, 106-107; and Coulson, 3.

<sup>166</sup> Forest, *Teaching Terror*, 73.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> Alan Cowell, "At a Mosque in London, bin Laden is Hailed as a Hero," *New York Times*, September 13, 2002, A12; and Eric Lichtbrau with William Glaberson, "Millions Raised for Qaeda in Brooklyn, U.S. Says," *New York Times*, March 5, 2003, A1.

preaching jihad. Al Farouq in particular has long been under the scrutiny of U.S. officials for its terrorist ties. Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, who is currently in prison for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center attack, was the imam there in the early 1990s.<sup>170</sup>

### *The Internet and Virtual Terrorist Recruitment*

The internet has proven to be one of the most useful tools of terrorism.<sup>171</sup> It is a communication tool, an educational forum, and of course a place for recruitment.<sup>172</sup> After the al Qaeda camps were destroyed in Afghanistan during *Operation Enduring Freedom*, the jihadi movement had to turn to other resources not only to train their members, but also to attract them:

As governments root and destroy various terrorist training camps in numerous countries, Internet-savvy supporters within the broader extremist movement have created virtual training camps through online publications, chat rooms, and discussion boards. Terrorists use these online resources to raise funds, recruit supporters, share information, and coordinate their activities.<sup>173</sup>

This virtual recruitment provides the individual a high degree of anonymity. Hence, the movement is harder to track, harder to infiltrate, and harder to destroy. This makes the internet an ideal place for terrorist recruitment because there are so few limits and no real borders. Someone in Indonesia, for example, can now communicate and network with fellow jihadis in Afghanistan or Morocco in minutes. The internet has made terrorist recruitment a global endeavor.

The use the internet has become a major recruitment and propaganda tool for al Qaeda in Iraq. Its former leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, “established the Web as a

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<sup>170</sup> Lichtbrau, A1.

<sup>171</sup> Forest, 96.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 96-99.

<sup>173</sup> Kenney, “How Terrorists Learn,” 39.

powerful tool of the global jihad, mobilizing computer-savvy allies who inspired extremists in Iraq and beyond with lurid video clips of the bombings and beheadings his group carried out.”<sup>174</sup> Zarqawi and others like him have harnessed the internet as a multi-pronged tool to recruit, inspire, and teach fellow jihadis around the world. It is believed that Zarqawi was one of the men seen in the Nicholas Berg beheading video, which has become a main jihadi attraction on the internet.<sup>175</sup>

### *American Theaters of Action*

The War on Terror has become one of the leading radicalizing factors for terrorism in the Muslim world.<sup>176</sup> As noted by Daniel Jordan, “Iraq is now a breeding ground for terrorists.”<sup>177</sup> According to declassified portions of the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) from April 2006:

The Iraq conflict has become the “cause celebre” for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of U.S. involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihad movement.<sup>178</sup>

Despite the rhetoric about the War on Terror not being a war against Islam, the perception on the Muslim street is quite different. Although the administration has taken steps to clarify what they deem the enemy, that enemy, regardless of its radical nature, is seen by many Muslims to be Islam. And despite the fact that these radicals hardly

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<sup>174</sup> Scott Shane, “The Grisly Jihadist Network That He Inspired Is Busy Promoting Zarqawi’s Militant Views,” *New York Times*, June 9, 2006, A9.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Dana Priest, “Iraq New Terror Breeding Ground,” *Washington Post*, January 14, 2005, A1.

<sup>177</sup> Daniel Jordan, “Iraq’s Pandora’s Box,” *United Press International*, February 21, 2006.

<sup>178</sup> *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate “Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States,”* dated April 2006. Available at: [http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/msnbc/sections/news/060926\\_Declassified\\_NIE\\_Key\\_Judgments.pdf](http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/msnbc/sections/news/060926_Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf)

represent all Muslims, many Muslims take this as an assault on them regardless of their affiliation or lack thereof with jihadi terrorist organizations. When bin Laden makes statements about the “infidels” launching an attack on Islam, his declarations, based on the perception of many Muslims, seem correct. As Marc Juergensmeyer said:

The war-against-terrorism strategy can be dangerous in that it can play into the scenario that religious terrorists themselves have fostered: the image of a world at war between secular and religious forces. A belligerent secular enemy has often been just what religious activists have hoped for.<sup>179</sup>

Not only is Bush losing hearts and minds, he is proving bin Laden’s points, validating his claims, and laying the groundwork for the next generation of mujahadeen. In terms of recruitment, this is an ideal strategy for bin Laden and al Qaeda. As the U.S. began preparations for the Iraq invasion, Al Qaeda recruitment picked up in 30-40 countries.<sup>180</sup> “Recruiters for groups sponsoring terrorist acts reportedly told researchers that volunteers were beating down their doors to join.”<sup>181</sup>

Refugee camps are another source of terrorist recruitment. Many Afghans fled the country following the American overthrow of the Taliban.<sup>182</sup> These people are now living across the border in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran.<sup>183</sup> Not everyone who left Afghanistan was a Taliban or an al Qaeda sympathizer. In fact, many Afghans did not support either of these organizations. Much has changed since the U.S. invasion in 2001, however. The ousting of the Taliban left a political vacuum in Afghanistan. Despite the efforts of the Karzai government and the international community, little has been done to

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<sup>179</sup> Juergensmeyer, 235.

<sup>180</sup> Scott Atran, “Mishandling Suicide Terrorism,” *Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2004), 74.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Larry Thompson, “War’s Forgotten Faces,” *The Atlantic Online* December 18, 2001.

Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/200112u/int2001-12-18>

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

alleviate the conflict and ethnic tensions that have fractured the country for decades. The security situation has worsened, leaving millions without a homeland. The camps make for prime recruitment as the situation there is rife with anger and frustration, which recruiters readily tap.

In addition, the U.S. supports many regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere that many Muslims view as oppressive. The governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, for instance, have all cooperated and worked with the U.S. to varying degrees. This, as mentioned previously, is an affront to many Muslims, specifically to bin Laden and al Qaeda. As these governments crack down on terrorists and Islamic extremists and work with the U.S. in the War on Terror, they are in effect declaring war on their own people and Islam.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, they become “fair game.”

The recruitment for jihadi terrorism that has occurred over the years can be isolated to the places where there is either an American presence physically (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states) or where the U.S. has a strong presence or influence financially and politically (e.g., Pakistan, Egypt, Israel/Palestine, and Indonesia). As long as the U.S. retains a firm presence in the Muslim world, terrorist recruitment will continue.

### **Strategies for Recruitment and Indoctrination**

Indoctrination brings the new recruit into the fold of the organization, educates him about the group and its missions, and prepares him for martyrdom: “to prepare as Al-Qaida jihadists, recruits undergo spiritual preparation and basic military and survival

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<sup>184</sup> Juergensmeyer, 244.

training.”<sup>185</sup> Terrorist indoctrination is a multifaceted process of psychological conditioning and religious education.<sup>186</sup> Indoctrination is the ideological training portion of the process. This is the essential process in the formation of the terrorist mindset. It works to solidify the individual’s commitment to the organization and the cause:

Recruits immerse themselves “all day long in the same discussions,” watch jihad videos, engage in endless talk of jihad. In these tiny universes, cut off from reality, it is easy to slide into feral fanaticism, to yearn for death and destruction.<sup>187</sup>

The selection process for recruitment and later indoctrination is highly selective. Once the undesirables have been weeded out, the focus shifts toward recruiting those individuals with specific and desirable skills that best suit the needs of the organization.<sup>188</sup> After group formation is complete, the recruits “must become familiar with group culture including the rules, practices, philosophy, and decision making and other regulatory functions.”<sup>189</sup>

During the indoctrination process, the recruits are often kept isolated from other members of the terrorist organization.<sup>190</sup> They are also encouraged to sever or weaken ties with family members and friends, particularly those who do not share jihadi motivations or those who do not share their level of piety.<sup>191</sup> Keeping the recruits isolated keeps them together as a group and, therefore, as a single entity.<sup>192</sup> Interaction with outsiders is seen as posing a potential threat to the group’s existence.<sup>193</sup> The terrorist

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<sup>185</sup> Faria, 265.

<sup>186</sup> Jenkins, 86.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>188</sup> Post, “The Radical Group 1,” 91.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Jenkins, 88.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Hudson, 35.

<sup>193</sup> Jenkins, 88.

organization becomes the recruit's family and, thus, his world. The recruit then must learn to rely only on his fellow jihadis. Removing the recruit from society keeps the individual away from any contradictory forces that may lead him away from the group.

Terrorist recruiters may use a wide variety of strategies to attract potential trainees. The following sub-sections describe some of the techniques used by al Qaeda to attract recruits, educate and prepare future jihadists, and solidify the terrorist mentality. These techniques include the use of the media and propaganda to spread the jihadi ideology, the promise of rewards to martyrs' families and to martyrs in the afterlife, the dehumanization of the enemy to isolate and degrade the target, the manipulation of history and religion to shame or guilt the recruit into performing his "spiritual duty," and the formation of group allegiance and group think.

### *Media and Propaganda*

Recruiters have been known to use various kinds of video tapes to attract potential recruits.<sup>194</sup> These videos have included taped testimonials of previous martyrs, executions, and beheadings, as well as messages from bin Laden and Zawahiri.<sup>195</sup> These tapes and other forms of propaganda are not only easily accessible on the internet, but are often shown in settings like mosques and schools. The point is to reach these individuals on a personal level. Seeing with their own eyes what others have accomplished is a

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<sup>194</sup> Evan F. Kohlmann, "The Real Online Terrorist Threat," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 5 (September/October 2006), 116-118.

<sup>195</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 289; and Jenkins, 87.

powerful motivator for jihadi recruits. The execution of American Nicholas Berg, for example, shows the potential jihadi what jihad is about and where his obligations lie.<sup>196</sup>

### *Rewards*

Many jihadi terrorists believe that after their deaths, they will enter paradise, where they will be greeted by 72 virgins.<sup>197</sup> This idea of paradise is a great motivator for the terrorist, as he is brought to believe that the afterlife will be better than his own current existence.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, many martyrs are lauded as heroes in their communities.<sup>199</sup> Streets are named after them, their parents are congratulated, and holidays celebrate their sacrifice. Suicide terrorists have achieved a cult like celebrity status in certain parts of the Muslim world. This can be very alluring for the individual who may want to achieve that status and that fame. In countries that offer few opportunities to excel or prosper, this may be an individual's only opportunity to stand out and make a name for himself and his family.<sup>200</sup> Waging jihad therefore becomes a vehicle for self-fulfillment via selfless action.

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<sup>196</sup> Kohlman, 118.

<sup>197</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 163.

<sup>198</sup> This is an interesting tool to use because no one is around to actually disprove it. With no one to discredit the belief, there will not be a way to convince potential recruits that this idea may be false. As long as there are radical Islamists teaching this, there will be recruits willing to die for this reward.

<sup>199</sup> L. Rowell Huesmann, "How to Grow a Terrorist Without Really Trying," *Unpublished Paper* March 13, 2004, 9. Available at:

<http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/roots/Huesmann.HowToGrowTerrorists.pdf>

<sup>200</sup> Post, "When Hatred Is Bred," 628-629.

### *Dehumanization of The Enemy*

Dehumanizing the enemy is not specific to terrorism. It is a common practice in warfare – conventional and asymmetrical. But the use of certain epithets or classifications in jihadi terrorism does not just serve the purpose of belittling the enemy to make them easier to kill. This dehumanization is the reason and justification for their actions:

A group with extremist ideologies first eliminates a new recruit's old social personal identities, and then reconditions to identify the group's enemies as evil subhumans or nonhuman who should be killed.<sup>201</sup>

As these “subhumans” are “infidels” or impious Muslims, they are therefore an enemy of Islam. Dehumanizing the enemy is related to locating and targeting the enemy for the jihadi terrorist. As these subhumans are the enemy, specifically, as opposed to representatives of the enemy (as in a conventional warfare setting), the dehumanization is made personal. Jihadi terrorists see things in such Manichean terms that they view themselves as “good” fighting “evil.”<sup>202</sup> This “evil” is anyone who is a threat to Islam. “Infidels” and the West are a threat to Islam. Hence, the “infidels” are evil and must be destroyed. The enemy is, therefore, dehumanized by the rhetoric of the ideology.

### *Manipulation of Religion and History*

A terrorist organization uses many psychological forms of manipulation to solidify a recruit's belief and allegiance to the group and to jihad. One way this is done is to emphasize the recruit's religious duty as a Muslim to wage jihad. As Ehud Sprinzak noted:

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<sup>201</sup> Forest, 73.

<sup>202</sup> Richardson, 41.

Recruiters will often exploit religious beliefs when indoctrinating would-be bombers, using their subjects' faith in a reward in paradise to strengthen and solidify preexisting sacrificial motives.<sup>203</sup>

By using this form of manipulation, the organization can literally shame an individual into action. Using terminology like “duty” and “obligation” appeals to the recruit and his sense of faith. In *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, Michael Scheuer discusses how bin Laden has been highly critical of his fellow Muslims who have not taken up jihad.<sup>204</sup> Bin Laden often equates their plight and troubles with their own failure to stand up to oppressive regimes.<sup>205</sup> This “blaming the victim” technique is interesting for several reasons. First, it tells potential recruits that they are not true Muslims unless they are defending themselves or Islam. This, in turn, may erase any doubts for the recruit as to what the true path is. Second, by telling potential recruits that they are partially to blame for what has happened, it establishes a sense of guilt that can later be translated in action. This is not to imply that bin Laden does not believe what he says or that his words are baseless rhetoric. This is also not to suggest that these recruits have been brainwashed or subjected to any other cult-like manipulations. What bin Laden has done is to act as a voice for the people as opposed to a voice at the people. He works to inspire and incite. Bin Laden's influence is therefore one of his greatest weapons.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Ehud Sprinzak, “Rational Fanatics,” *Foreign Policy* no. 120 (September/October 2000), 69.

<sup>204</sup> Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, 62-63.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Another means of manipulation is to emphasize that individual's obligation based on historical precedent, highlighting those who fought “infidels” in the past. Bin Laden's own historical narrative, based on his experiences during the Soviet Afghan War, gives him legitimacy as he had fought jihad as a young man. Ibid., 60.

### *Group Allegiance*

Once an individual has been recruited and selected by a terrorist organization, his standing in the group is conditional to his group allegiance. Once in the group, the individual surrenders his own sense of personal identity to the organization and the movement.<sup>207</sup> With the sense of self now taken out of the personal equation, an individual will no longer act on his own accord, but will act for the greater good of the organization. As Jerrold Post notes, “once recruited, there is a clear fusing of individual identity and group identity, particularly among the more radical elements of each organization.”<sup>208</sup> His loyalties are no longer to himself, his family, or his country. His loyalty is to the cell, the organization, and the movement. “This group provides a sense of belonging, a feeling of self-importance, and a new belief system that defines the terrorist act as morally acceptable and the group’s goals as of paramount importance.”<sup>209</sup>

Once the individual self has been absorbed into the group, and allegiance has been established, “groupthink,” as Jerrold Post describes it, sets in:

Groupthink refers to the conformity-seeking tendencies of decision making groups, when “members strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action...group think leads to deleterious cognitive and interpersonal consequences for decision making, resulting in dramatic simplification of the decision making process and intolerance of dissent that increases the group’s vulnerability to polarization.”<sup>210</sup>

Once groupthink is present, there is no room for dissent. Decisions go unchallenged. And unwavering obedience is expected. This collective form of decision making and blind agreement is vital to the organization. As the individual comes to further embrace the

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<sup>207</sup> Victoroff, 30.

<sup>208</sup> Post, “When Hatred Is Bred,” 628.

<sup>209</sup> Hudson, 34.

<sup>210</sup> Post, “The Radical Group 1,” 93.

group and the ideology, he will then be more likely to embrace any mission that has been assigned to him. Groupthink will not allow individuals the opportunity for ideological digression. It is this collective allegiance and thought that keeps the group's cohesive structure intact.<sup>211</sup>

Group allegiance also works to justify the group's activities. The actions taken by the group are considered by its members and the parent organization to be sanctified based on ideology. Because these actions are based on such beliefs, and because these individuals believe they are fighting evil, they may come to believe that they are not responsible for their actions. As Rex Hudson writes, "in order to absolve his own guilt, the terrorist must claim that under the circumstances he has no choice but to do what he must do."<sup>212</sup> Being part of the group thus takes the responsibility away from the individual. As a group, individual members are justified in what they are doing.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding terrorist recruitment is vital to counterterrorism. Terrorism does not start solely from macro-level root causes. Without members, terrorist organizations cannot exist. Understanding how and why an individual is radicalized and recruited into a terrorist organization is therefore an important part of addressing the macro level root causes via the micro-level radicalizing factors.

In order to fight terrorism effectively, it must be addressed at all levels. The individual level is where terrorism begins. It is the individual who keeps the organization operational and helps perpetuate the organization's ideology. It is therefore important to

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<sup>211</sup> Hudson, 36.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 40.

know what causes an individual to embrace terrorism. While it may be difficult to establish certain terrorist profiles and characteristics, terrorist organizations do establish such schemes. Instead of relying solely on a profile based on who might be recruited, it is more helpful to supplement such profiles with examinations of recruitment patterns.

After examining the radicalizing elements that drive an individual to embrace terrorism, it is apparent that there is not one single factor that leads to terrorism, but a series of elements which combine to make an individual more susceptible to recruitment. The fact that millions of people share the same grievances as those who become jihadi terrorists and yet do not become terrorists themselves indicates that there is a much more personal element to the individual who embraces terrorism than is often assumed. For such an individual there seems to be a certain pathology as to why they chose that route, while others did not.

There are a number of opinions as to the psychological make up of a terrorist. Mental health professionals and academics have offered a number of explanations and diagnoses as to what distinguishes the terrorist pathology. The problem is that none of these really stand out. While they may explain certain elements of the “terrorist mind” or terrorist behavior, these pathologies are found in many people who have no terrorist affiliation, let alone violent tendencies. Therefore, they do not make the “terrorist mind” any more distinguishable from the mind of the average person.

Instead, it could be argued that the individual who is recruited by a terrorist organization is more susceptible to organized violence based on how this individual internalizes external societal strains. Be it historical grievance, social acceptance, religious fervor, economic plight, or any combination thereof, such an individual is

taking it upon himself to right society's wrongs. The terrorist organization provides him the outlet he needs to take action. The fact that these organizations exist and are comprised of many other like minded individuals validates the anger and frustration felt by these particular people. For the individual who is recruited, the terrorist organization functions as an ideological and psychological safety net. The recruit is, thus, conditioned by the organization, which taps into his anger and allows that frustration to manifest itself through obedience and action. The organization gives the recruit a purpose in life and, through the organization's actions and teachings, confirms for the recruit what he already believes.

When recruitment does take place it is often done in a social setting: schools, mosques, prisons. These are all examples of highly contained social structures whose dynamics draw a clear line between "us" and "them." For individuals in these social settings, there is interaction with others like him who may share his extremist views and desires for action. Many of these structures are inclusive. It is therefore easy to see how some individuals are brought into the terror fold when their entire social structure or network is centered around one particular ideology. Many of these individuals may have grown up in a conflict setting where terrorism and violence are accepted or even encouraged. In this setting the individual is already primed for recruitment as this is a societal norm for him. The jihadi recruit is thus a product of his own environment.

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