Redefining Terror:
An Historical Perspective on the Modern Threat Environment

by

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To my family and friends:
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For both political analysts and the American public alike, September 11th served as a defining feature of the American political experience, a turning point in the way one perceives the relationship between the U.S. and its opponents. Like the Cold War conflict, terrorism now defines the United States’ foreign policy, representing not a policy initiative amongst a larger grand strategy, but the impetus for U.S. international action as a whole. Even today, nearly seven years after the tragic attack, the ramifications of 9/11 still dominate debates among foreign policy analysts. As such, it follows that one might ascribe a degree of significance to modern terrorism, using the concept not only as an explanation for the current American foreign policy, but as a means of defining a new era in international politics. For those political scientists who ascribe to such a theory, the notion of a stateless international community is not merely a hypothetical, but a burgeoning reality, a manifestation of a changing political culture in which the dispossessed now have the power to reshape the global culture. Terrorists no longer advance a set of materially based, concrete goals, but perpetuate a distinct ideology, considered by many theorists to be a diametric opposite to the West. Terrorism is thus redefined as “new terror,” a tactic of those who seek to destroy, rather than negotiate.

From this perspective, terrorism exists in respect to what it does rather than what it is. Political scientists declare the existence of “new terrorism” based on the magnitude of 9/11 and define the characteristics of this change in terms of its material outcomes as opposed to a comprehensive explanation for terrorism’s rebirth. The notion that religion drives this modern iteration of conflict pervades the issue, while alternative factors receive little, if any attention. Yet, beyond this narrow-minded analysis, the notion that one might reduce modern terror to a single concept for its motivation demonstrates a general disregard for the evolution of this practice as both a political and survival strategy.
Instead, one must place modern terror in its historical context, providing not simply an abstract explanation for the motivations and strategies of the modern terrorist organization, but a framework that outlines several crucial steps in the evolution of terrorism. By reviewing these historic analogs, one finds that the essence of the modern terrorist organization cannot be deemed revolutionary. Its roots are clearly visible in several of its predecessors, thereby requiring an alternative explanation for this phenomenon that smacks of revolutionary content. Furthermore, an analysis of terrorism’s evolution contextualizes the significance of each era to its respective public in an effort to eliminate any bias of proximity to modern terror. Then, after fully evaluating the historical development of terrorism “the concept,” the researcher must identify those features of the present that differentiate the threat environment from its predecessors. While it is possible the modern Islamist terrorist developed an entirely new school of political violence, the breadth of terrorism’s history makes such an outcome extremely unlikely, forcing the researcher to expand his scope of analysis.

To this end, one must not only consider the rapid proliferation of faith-based terror, but the fundamental difference of the modern threat environment from its predecessors. Individually, neither criterion sufficiently establishes causation for a new era of terrorism, as both exist in independent historical examples. However, the union of both religion and globalization redefines the modern threat environment, changing both its scope and significance. The traditional rules of terror no longer apply, as the modern terrorist faces an exponentially greater threat in conjunction with an equally expanded set of policy alternatives. Therefore, modern terror exists in a multi-dimensional context, enabled both by the modern elements of globalization and the polarizing effects of the radical Islamist movement.
Chapter 1: The Assassins

Within the context of terrorism studies, the Assassins provide the researcher with a base from which to evaluate all future terrorist activity. Unlike the modern attacks on the Khobar Towers or the World Trade Center, there were few, if any precedents, which the Assassins could follow, allowing for a purity unseen in modern examples of terrorism.\(^1\) Thus, the question of an attack’s significance as a function of its proximity to the present does not cloud an analysis of the Assassins as it does the modern terrorist organization, allowing the Assassins to provide a case study for terrorism while controlling for the emotional effects such attacks create. As truly the first terrorist organization, the genesis of their actions proves instructive for the formation of modern terrorist organizations, employing many of the same models and strategies still popular today. From a tactical perspective, the Assassins offer a direct explanation for modern terrorist strategies, using what were effectively suicide missions to carry out their political goals. Admittedly, the impact of a man charging with a dagger lacks the horror of crashing a 767 into a skyscraper; however, both situations apply similar theories. For a terrorist organization that usually lacked the means to engage in a full-scale conflict, the motivation of a man who faced death removed this power imbalance, allowing the organization to compete on a leveled playing field. As historian Christoph Reuter notes, “a man without fear of death was a man who was capable of anything.”\(^2\) Thus, like the modern terrorist, the disparity in power between the terrorist organization and its stated foe creates a situation primed for innovative strategies such as the suicide attacker.

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Even with regard to target selection, the Assassins offer an uncanny look into the past of modern day terror, as they targeted political and religious figures seen as professing religious doctrines incompatible with their Ismailis tradition.\(^3\) Regardless of ideology, the use of religion only furthers the significance of the Assassins to a modern analysis of terrorist activity. Unlike Christianity, “Islam … had only one authority right from the start: Muhammad, who neither suffered martyrdom like Christ, nor was forbidden like Moses to enter into the Promised Land.”\(^4\) This distinction, while subtle, will consistently reappear as one of the defining features that not only links historic and modern faith-based terrorism, but that defines the inherent conflict between the West and modern terrorist organizations. For the Assassins, they “saw themselves as engaged in a struggle to purify Islam and made extraordinary efforts to demonstrate that they acted defensively.”\(^5\) From a political perspective, the Assassins were also extremely active, striving for “the establishment of the true Imamate …,”\(^6\) striking at regional leaders in an effort to create effects similar to those of modern terror: disorganization and political destruction. Therefore, from both a tactical, as well as an ideological perspective, a proper evaluation of modern terrorism requires an evaluation of the past, recognizing that the issues we face today are not isolated, but exist within a long tradition of religious terrorism. Thus, the history of Islam provides a solid starting point from which to base a modern comparison, tracing the cultural patterns of religious division and purification to similar patterns today.

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\(^4\) Reuter, 21.

\(^5\) Rapoport, 668.

\(^6\) Lewis, 132.
The Religious Origins of the Assassins

The foundations of the group that became the Assassins stems back well beyond any direct conflict of the era, finding root in the crisis of succession following the death of the prophet Muhammad. Comparable to any secular struggle for succession, the search for a leader proved contentious, as the order of succession was ill defined prior to Muhammad’s death. The Muslim community ultimately selected Abu Bakr to succeed Muhammad as the spiritual leader of the faith; however, those favoring Ali, the cousin of Muhammad, as the rightful successor contested this decision, breaking off to form what would become “the Shiite movement.” This sect emphasized the restoration of what they considered “‘true’ Islam,” and a return to “justice and equality … [rather than] inequality, privilege and domination.” They “embraced all those within the tradition who were excluded from power ….” From a modern perspective, such a deviation offers little in terms of sustainability, relying on an impassioned minority to maintain a movement against a deeply established, religious organization. Yet, the Shia branch of Islam was equally invested in religion, allowing it to persist even after the murder of its founder, Ali. While over 400 years prior to the founding of the Assassins, this event creates one of the key elements of their emergence, establishing both their dominant ideology as well as an opposition group which would eventually serve as the Assassins’ primary target. However, the religious indoctrination of the Shia sect is significant beyond this divergence, as it defines the legitimacy

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7 Lewis, 20.
9 Chaliand and Blin, 62.
10 Lewis, 21.
11 Reuter, 22.
12 Lewis, 21.
of the Assassins for whom the elimination of tyrannical leaders posing as religious figures was a primary goal.

Yet, before the emergence of the Assassins, another split within Shiism occurred, which formed the religious basis for the Assassins. As Chaliand and Blin describe, “The death of the sixth Imam Ja’far in 765 ignited a crisis of legitimacy, pitting his two sons, Isma’il and Musa, and their supporters against each other in competition for the succession.”\(^{13}\) The result matched that of Islam’s earlier division, resulting in two sects, one headed by the followers of Musa, generally recognized as the now primary strain of Shiism, and that of Isma’il, which became a smaller, radical version of Shiism.\(^{14}\) Deviating further from the traditional confines of a religious order, the Ismailis took on even more aspects of a political society, returning to the teachings of the Quran for guidance while incorporating Islam into the everyday lives of its “subjects.”\(^{15}\) The Assassins would eventually emerge to serve as the militaristic branch within Ismailism.\(^{16,17}\)

Given these conditions, the formation of the Assassins was a matter of course. Hasan-i Sabbah rose to the challenge of directing the expansion of the Ismailis against the impure teachings of Sunni Islam.\(^{18}\) However, the significance of their religious foundation extends well beyond the formation of a natural adversary, but provides the support requisite for an insurgent type campaign. The physical limitations of the Assassins mandated a sect with extreme devotion, willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their cause.\(^{19}\) The faith centered Ismailis and the radical nature of the Assassins created the perfect breeding ground for such support, allowing

\(^{13}\) Chaliand and Blin, 62.
\(^{14}\) Chaliand and Blin, 62.
\(^{15}\) Chaliand and Blin, 62.
\(^{17}\) Chaliand and Blin, 62.
\(^{18}\) Chaliand and Blin, 63.
\(^{19}\) Reuter, 25.
not only for the success of the Assassins, but the revolutionary tactics they would employ to achieve the purification of Islam. The need for a solution to the power disparity between the Ismailis and the Sunnis sparked the development of the Assassins, creating the basis for the tactics that would ultimately serve the modern terrorist organization.

The Birth of the Assassins

“For centuries the Shi’a had squandered their zeal and blood for their Imams, without avail. … All but a few had failed, crushed by the armed forces of a state and an order [Sunnis] that they were too weak to overthrow.” Thus, the power disparity between religions created a unique place for the Assassins, and most importantly, their revolutionary tactics. As a recent convert to the Ismailis faith, Hasan-i Sabbah traveled to Egypt, encountering the “vizier of the Seljuk emperor,” the Seljuks being enemies of the Ismailis. It was during this stay in Egypt that Hasan both recognized the tactical troubles facing Ismailism and discovered his first center for ideological support. Encountering significant resistance to his cause, Hasan recognized the need for a following and a region of operations strongly in support of the Ismailis cause, without which the small resistance to Sunni Islam lacked any chance of success. Leaving Egypt, Hasan would travel to Persia, coming upon the Daylam region where he found a population surprisingly “receptive to the Isma’ili mission,” from which he recruited his first followers, eventually establishing a base of operations in a castle “Alamut in the Elburz mountains,” in 1090. This fortification, while technically occurring after the formation of the Assassins, provides a useful

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20 Chaliand and Blin, 63.
21 Lewis, 130.
22 Chaliand and Blin, 64.
23 Chaliand and Blin, 64.
24 Chaliand and Blin, 64.
25 Chaliand and Blin, 64.
26 Reuter, 24.
event by which to mark their establishment, both in ideology, but also in tactics that stemmed from the geography of their location. The fundamental conflict between Sunni Islam and Hasan’s Ismailis breed of Shiism led the leader to forcefully pursue the spread of Shiism throughout the region, focusing heavily on missionaries, not only as a means to spread support for the religion and his cause, but as a political and military strategy. As such, one finds that the emergence of the Assassins from a primarily religious sect was intertwined with the strategies they employed both during the emergence and as the organization expanded. The limitations faced by Hasan and his followers would determine their path, but more importantly, the path of modern terrorism.

Motives and Strategies

As previously noted, Hasan’s acquisition of the castle at Alamut was one of the first significant actions undertaken by the Assassins, marking their establishment as an organization and providing the fledgling group a safe haven from which to conduct its affairs. Returning to the question of scale, Hasan understood that as a numerically disadvantaged competitor, conventional tactics would not suffice to destroy the Sunni opposition, but that unconventional, terrorist tactics were necessary for a successful campaign. However, terrorism alone would not provide Hasan the solution he needed. Instead, as Lewis states,

For such a campaign of sustained terror there were two obvious requirements – organization and ideology. There had to be an organization capable both of launching the attack and surviving the inevitable counter-blow; there had to be a system of belief … to inspire and sustain the attackers to the point of death.

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27 Chaliand and Blin, 64.
28 Chaliand and Blin, 65.
29 Reuter, 24.
30 Lewis, 131.
Thus, Alamut and the support of the surrounding region played a crucial role in the survivability of the Assassins. Recognizing that the organization lacked a substantial force with which to defend their base of operations, Hasan carefully chose Alamut for its geographic location, providing a natural security solution in its remote, and easily defensible, position.\(^{31}\)

Beyond the basic security requirements, the Assassins faced what they perceived as the constant threat of Sunni Islam. Recalling the close bond between religion and government, such a threat not only poses a danger to an ideology, but threatens the very structure of a society. In light of these needs, the Assassins required a two-fold strategy, capable of not only eliminating material threats to their power, but maintaining the support of the constituencies whose governments they overthrew. First dispatching missionaries to a region, Hasan exploited the weaknesses of his enemies, taking advantage of popular discontent to convert the target public and simultaneously weaken the support for their leaders.\(^{32}\) Yet, in their response to the presumable resistance of the target leadership, “the Assassins are without precedent.”\(^{33}\) Employing “planned, systematic and long-term … terror as a political weapon,”\(^{34}\) the Assassins revolutionized the role of small, dissonant factions in politics and interstate affairs. By recognizing that his Islamic enemies focused all of their power in a single figure, Hasan capitalized on the frailty of their political structure, allowing a single “terrorist” to incur substantial damage against an enemy several times the size of the Assassins.\(^{35}\)

Admittedly, the Assassins developed a sound strategy, but one must question what differentiates an “assassination” of a political figure by the Ismailis, as opposed to any other

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\(^{31}\) Chaliand and Blin, 64.
\(^{32}\) Chaliand and Blin, 65.
\(^{33}\) Lewis, 129.
\(^{34}\) Lewis, 129.
\(^{35}\) Lewis, 130-131.
religious or political association, specifically: What defines terrorism? Unlike other murderers of their day who would commonly employ “missiles … [or] poison,” the Assassins relied solely on bladed weapons, reducing the chance of escape, reflecting a socialization that deemed survival a disgrace. While “Human sacrifice and ritual murder have no place in Islamic law, tradition or practice,” the virtual suicide of these missions provided the Assassins with the advantage they required. As Reuter notes, the inevitability of death for the assassin removed any obstacles faced by a traditional murderer, increasing the assassin’s effectiveness, and providing the organization with both an effective means of material, as well as psychological, terrorism. By redefining the terms of warfare, the Assassins realigned the strategic advantage in their favor, emphasizing a decentralized power structure and geographic defenses; however, the success of their campaigns relied upon the unique drive of its participants, their acceptance of death, and unparalleled solidarity of purpose.

Therefore, the Assassins’ tactics heavily relied upon their motive for action, again returning to the notion of interconnected religion and government. Beyond disrupting “the Sunni order,” the Assassins sought to purify Islam, viewing the dominance of ruling authorities in the execution of Islam as an intolerable heresy that required immediate action. Reuter reminds the reader that, “Given the indissociable link between creed and power, faith and rule in Islam, Sabbah’s repudiation of the idea that religious authorities had a monopoly on interpretation amounted to a declaration of war on the rulers themselves.” For the assassin, the religious

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36 Lewis, 127.
37 Lewis, 127.
38 Lewis, 127.
39 Reuter, 25.
40 Lewis, 134.
41 Rapoport, 667-668.
42 Reuter, 24.
beliefs professed by Ismailism served as a personal motivation, more powerful than a simple desire to expand the empire of a single ruler. Instead, the agent viewed himself within a larger picture, playing a role that would bring glory to both himself and Islam, and thus legitimizing his death for the cause. Unlike secular engagements, the religious dimension of the Assassins proves to be a key aspect of their success, allowing for a deeply unified order that is essential to any organization facing a numerical disadvantage.

*Bridging the Gap of Time*

Regardless of their accomplishments, one must question if the Assassins provide a relevant case study for modern terror. While Hasan-i Sabbah certainly established the terrorist tradition, the circumstances of his power might lead one to relegate his organization to the past, dismissing it as an outmoded organization that merely parallels a distinctly modern phenomenon. Yet, as Rapoport reminds the researcher, to discount historic examples of terror because they lack the grandeur or scale of modern attacks ignores the fundamental principles of terrorism.\(^\text{43,44}\)

While scale certainly determines the degree of severity, terrorism is not contingent upon a certain amount of damage, but a set of tactics that empower an organization. The ability of an organization to combine unconventional and psychological tactics with strategic innovations that exploit the weaknesses of their enemy defines the basis for a “terrorist” designation. Therefore, in this context, the Assassins provide the researcher with a standard of comparison for modern religious terror, controlling for the emotions that inherently bias any evaluation of the effects of Al Qaeda or similar organizations. The very features that differentiated the Assassins from the traditional enemy during the 11\(^{\text{th}}\) century remain those that make terror a significant force in modern society.

\(^{43}\) Rapoport, 659.
\(^{44}\) Rapoport, 672.
Specifically, with respect to the origins of the conflict between the West and Islamist terror, the formation of the Assassins within the Eastern culture identifies part of the origin for today’s conflict. As an organization rooted in an ideology that combines religion with its political structure, the Assassins were inherently prone to conflict, as any clash of ideology not only posed a theoretical threat to a given regime, but actually threatened the legitimacy of its political structure.\textsuperscript{45} Admittedly, the conflict today is not this direct, relying on material as well as ideological factors. However, the inability of the West to address the concerns of the Middle East through traditional diplomatic measures is reminiscent of this faith-based political philosophy. Regardless of any positive intentions, the actions of the West face constant scrutiny by those who perceive its dominance as threatening to their survival as a culture, demanding a swift response to stem the tide of their perceived destruction. Similar to the challenges Hasan faced in his fight against the Sunni majority, the Islamist factions represent a significant minority with respect to the massive power of the West, explaining to a certain extent the failure of traditional diplomacy. A conventional military response by an Islamist nation lacks the impact achieved with unconventional warfare, but plays to the strengths of terrorism, redefining its relevance in the modern era.

On a tactical level, both the recruitment of members and execution of missions remains surprisingly similar to that of the Assassins, comprised primarily of country and mountain dwellers from regions with a history of “religious deviation.”\textsuperscript{46} Yet, the focus of both groups on suicide tactics provides a striking point of comparison. While many critics condemn the practice, relying on a Western standard of judgment, the tactical advantages of a suicide mission are obvious when considered with respect to the Assassins. “Over the centuries, such volunteers

\textsuperscript{45} Reuter, 24.
\textsuperscript{46} Lewis, 135.
for death would become an integral element of the history of terrorism, as can still be seen today in the status enjoyed in certain quarters by the nineteen dead terrorists of the September 11, 2001, or by Palestinian and Tamil suicide bombers.\(^\text{47}\) Thus, the tactics employed by the modern Islamist terrorist are not new, but possess a rich history in serving the needs of the minority. Specifically, the use of the dagger by the Assassins offers a timely parallel, as the assassin would often allow “their target’s bodyguards to stab them to death.”\(^\text{48}\)

Yet, even with these parallels, the temptation returns to disassociate the Assassins from modern terrorists given the former’s inability to captivate the attention of the entire world, to commit acts on a grand scale, and thus presume on this basis that the two eras are actually different. Instead, one must recognize that the core features of terrorism have not changed since their inception, maintaining a focus on innovation, a shock component, and the ability to discern the weaknesses of the enemy in order to level the playing field and reduce the advantages of size.\(^\text{49}\) Therefore, the motives for the emergence of modern grand terror extend beyond the desire for a revolutionary approach. While new to the United States, to suggest that fundamentalist terror, or what is known today as Grand Terrorism, is a revolutionary concept, grossly devalues the role of history in discerning modern policy solutions.\(^\text{50,51}\) Rather, the Assassins provide context for the current conflict.

However, while recognizing the historical similarities to modern Islamist terror, one must question how far the analogy applies. When Rapoport wrote his evaluation of the Assassins and their relation to modern terror, the United States faced a threat environment fundamentally

\(^\text{47}\) Chaliand and Blin, 70.
\(^\text{48}\) Reuter, 25.
\(^\text{49}\) Rapoport, 672.
\(^\text{51}\) The concept of Grand Terrorism will be discussed in Chapter Three: The Origins of Modern Terror
different from that of the post-9/11 world. Thus, the differences between what was at the time modern terror and the strategies of the Assassins were readily apparent, sharing only the basic foundation of a terrorist organization. For the modern political theorist however, the differences today lack clear definition. While one cannot discount the significance of an historic parallel, to blindly subscribe to the theory that the Assassins provide the key to the modern problem of terrorism ignores one of the central tenets for a successful cell: Innovation. As Rapoport notes, “Holy terror never disappeared, and it seems to be reviving in new forms especially in, but not exclusive to, the Middle East.” This, however, does not preclude elements of religious terror from adapting to modern circumstances. To this end, one must not only recognize the significance of the Assassins in guiding the acts of modern, faith-based terror, but to apply the lessons of the Assassins to the present situation, identifying those factors upon which Hasan might capitalize and that allow terrorism to broaden its scope to a global scale. Globalization and the spread of technology serve as magnifying factors, allowing a vast array of cultures to interact that would otherwise remain isolated. Combined with an Islamist culture whose governmental security rests on the absence of opposition, the modern global international environment is prime for conflict. Therefore, in examining Hasan’s revolutionary strategy, one finds more than a clever parallel, but a framework that if modified to fit the modern era, serves to rationalize the irrational.

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52 Rapoport, 674.
Chapter 2: 19th & 20th Century Terror

Sharply contrasting the Assassins, mid-century terrorism, or terrorism ranging from the late 19th century until the 21st century, represents what would appear to be a significant divergence in terrorist ideology. Far from the religious terror of the past, a decidedly political aspect appears to underscore the motives for mid 20th century terrorism. The media often reduces this era to nothing more than a period of political radicalism, marked by both individual and government-sponsored terrorism linked by a desire to affect a specific political goal. Admittedly, political terrorism dominates the era, accounting for a majority of the terrorist activity reported, providing a point of comparison with regard to both the religious terrorism conducted by the Assassins and the supposedly new terrorism of today. However, when comparing mid-century terrorism’s history with that of the present, one must eschew this preconception and evaluate both the tactics and motivations of each organization with respect to its modern day counterparts. While the motivations for terrorism were predominately political, the crimes themselves possess qualities of not only political dissonance, but religious and social disorder as well. By re-evaluating the significance of the Anarchist Movement and the Munich Crisis of the 1972 Munich Olympic games, one finds more than a basis of comparison, but a series of precedents for those modern terrorist acts labeled “innovative.” These historical examples reveal the need for a new standard by which to measure the changes in terrorism, offering a perspective apart from the raw emotion resulting from one’s proximity to the recent terrorist activity. Thus, the selected terrorist movements offer two representative samples of the era, providing a political alternative to the religious terrorism of the Assassins while simultaneously affording perspective with regard to modern terror.
When evaluating the Anarchist movement, the public reaction to terrorist activity then, as compared with that of the modern public to Al Qaeda, provides a striking parallel which immediately requires consideration. With all respect for the tragedy that was September 11th, one must question if the subsequent public reaction is truly an effect of the magnitude and innovation of the attack or merely a question of proximity. As noted in the previous chapter, significant parallels exist between the motives and tactics of the Assassins and Al Qaeda; yet, the attacks are treated as a revolutionary form of warfare. Therefore, before reviewing the historical origins and practices associated with the Anarchist movement, consider the public response to its terrorist activities, and the similarities to the current reaction to 9/11.

Anarchist Terrorism: The Public Outcry

Before discussing the evolution of the anarchist movement as one of the representative forms of political terror during the 19th and 20th centuries, it is worth reviewing Walter Laqueur’s discussion of the public response to anarchist terror. Laqueur uncovers a striking parallel to the modern threat environment, describing a condition in which the anarchists managed to captivate the public, “… giving the impression of a giant conspiracy …” and creating a sense of fear for this new threat to domestic order. Without question, the anarchists certainly left their mark, as both “… presidents Garfield and McKinley were … killed,” along with Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Canovas, Austrian Empress Elizabeth, and the Italian King Umberto. Yet, it was later discovered, as Laqueur notes, that a majority of the attacks were carried out by independent

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53 When addressing the Anarchist movement, I am specifically referring to the period of activity during the end of the 19th century until approximately World War II, as this period offers pertinent comparisons with regard to other eras of terrorism.


55 Laqueur, 20.

56 Laqueur, 20.
parties who became associated with the anarchist cause as a result of the public fervor.\textsuperscript{57} Just as was the case following September 11\textsuperscript{th}, “Terrorism was regarded as a wholly new phenomenon, and it was conveniently forgotten that political murder had a very long history.”\textsuperscript{58} Similarly, commentators today treat the notion of faith-based terror as a revolutionary tactic of terrorist warfare. As such, it is essential to reflect on this example throughout one’s consideration of any terrorist movement, employing an event’s historical antecedents to provide perspective and eliminate the bias of one’s emotional proximity to the event.

\textit{A Brief History of Anarchism}

As with any historical example of terrorism, the definition of a particular strain of terrorist activities relies on the social circumstances and the socially prescribed definition of terrorism attributable to a particular period. For Novak, terrorism during the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries contained a combination of “… romanticism, religious idealization, messianism, dramatization and heroism, fantacism, and rationalization,”\textsuperscript{59} from which the terrorist profile developed, offering little variation from virtually all other terrorist organizations. However, considering the perceived motivations and ideologies of the anarchist terrorists and the anarchist movement as a whole, one finds that it straddles the bounds of traditional religious fundamentalism and secular, goal-oriented, terrorism. “The anarchists, rejecting the notion that society is governed by rational laws, maintained that so-called “scientific” theories of history and sociology were artificial contrivances of the human brain which served only to impede the

\textsuperscript{57} Laqueur, 20.
\textsuperscript{58} Laqueur, 20.
natural and spontaneous impulses of mankind.”

Fowler breaks this concept down into two essential dimensions, suggesting that anarchist theory operated on “… a nearly total rejection of the familiar norms and structures, especially the political ones, of their age, and … a quest for an existence in a harmonious, “natural” world in which government was a remote memory.”

Applying this model, one must then question how the anti-intellectual movement developed, with particular attention to its psychology. On an empirical level, Avrich proposes “… anarchism itself, the doctrines of Godwin, Stirner, and Proudhon, and, most important by far for the Russian anarchist movement, the doctrines of Bakunin…” Further he notes that both the Marxist and syndicalist movements also contributed to the development of the early 20th century anarchist movement and its terrorist activities. On an empirical level, Bakunin viewed the intelligentsia as an oppressive class, intent on excluding the general public from the realm of the academic in the same ways the Marxists viewed the bourgeois society, and thereby attempting to rule by way of intellect. Ironically, this negative view of the intelligentsia naturally disposed the anarchists to disdain the mainstream Marxist movement, viewing its initiatives as a select few manipulating an ideology of a privileged intellectual class, contrary to the proclaimed egalitarianism of Marxism. However, beyond a hatred for Marxist hypocrisy, the anarchists opposed Marxism for its very nature, the fact that it was “… a set of formalized,
general rules and regulations imposed on social order.” The very notion of government directly attacked the values of the anarchist, as he perpetually attempted to escape the control of external governance.

Naturally, as an organization fundamentally opposed to the mere notion of formal governance, the anarchists faced few, if any, alternatives to direct conflict with established modern society. However, to suggest that the anarchist movement embraced violence haphazardly ignores the ideological basis for the movement, specifically the “… humanitarian ethics of anarchism ….” Following a self-defined code of ethics, the anarchists limited their use of violence to situations where it is the only alternative and fully achieves the desired result. Anarchist theorist Peter Kropotkin carefully established a doctrine regarding the morality of anarchist terror specifically as it relates to the murder of what they perceived to be tyrannical heads of government. Laqueur reminds the reader that contrary to the harsh portrait of terrorism popular today, “… the anarchists of the 1890s, who opted for revolutionary violence, … [placed] an emphasis on the love of freedom, a highly developed moral sensitiveness, and a profound sense of justice.” Thus, the anarchists represent more than a violent response to the dominant social and political culture of the early 20th century. Instead, their motives and tactics reach to the core of one of terrorism’s central features with regard to

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67 Fowler, 741.
68 Fowler, 741.
69 Novak, 182.
70 Novak, 182.
71 Novak, 176-177.
72 Laqueur, 236.
both motivation and perpetuation, a characteristic crucial in understanding the current iteration of terrorist activity.\footnote{With regard to “modern terrorism,” this discussion of motivation is distinctly pertinent, as it is essential to understanding the current conflict in unbiased terms. Proximity, in this case, serves not only to over-emphasize the significance of modern terror, but biases the observer as to its methods, allowing the misconception that terrorist acts are somehow an incoherent, random expression of discontent with an ideologically incompatible society. Yet, as is the case with anarchist terrorism, the notion that al-Qaeda’s intentions are the product of an irrational ideological conflict veils the question of modern terror’s origins and differentiating features. In his discussion of collective action theory as it relates to terrorism, Dr. Anthony Oberschall identifies four dimensions of collective action theory as they relate to terrorism that serve as a strong basis for identifying the motivations for terrorist activity. He asserts, “Terrorism is not the act of madmen or political and religious sociopaths but of political agents who choose covert, violent means to achieve political goals, be they ethnonational, religious, or ideological. Terrorism is explained in the same way as other forms of collective action are – be they insurgencies, social movements, dissidents, or guerrillas (Obershchall 1995:ch1). Each of the four dimensions of collective action has to be considered: (1) discontent; (2) ideology-feeding grievances; (3) capacity to organize; and (4) political opportunity. A positive value on each dimension is necessary for collective action.” (Anthony Oberschall, “Explaining Terrorism: The Contribution of Collective Action Theory,” \textit{Sociological Theory} 22, no. 1 (2004): 27.) From this perspective, what appears to be irrational is actually measurable, or minimally, observable from a qualitative perspective, making these criteria essential in establishing a legitimate hypothesis for both the motives and operational success of the modern terrorist organization. As such, the anarchist movement serves as a reference, providing a basis for the conclusions of chapter five.}{73}

From a tactical perspective, the Anarchists parallel many of the strategies employed today, defining “Anarchism by deed,”\footnote{Novak, 177.}{74} or the use of terrorist acts not for their destructive power, but their ability to enact change within the Anarchists’ own support base. Such highly symbolic acts of terror intentionally draw on the emotions of the movement’s followers, invigorating them with an excitement and a sense of purpose that serves to solidify and strengthen the movement.\footnote{Novak, 177,179.}{75} The Anarchists saw such acts as opportunities for education, “… reminding the working class of its oppression, raising its revolutionary confidence, and making it more determined to overthrow...
the existing system.” Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Anarchists either attempted to or succeeded in assassinating numerous political figures, creating a sense of panic amongst the political world. Yet, while these acts of violence served their purpose as terrorist acts by deed, the public at large remained generally unenlightened regarding the Anarchists’ cause, ultimately turning against the movement in response to their numerous attacks against public officials. One cannot forget that at their very core, the Anarchists began as an advocacy organization, fighting for the rights of the individual oppressed by the government. Unlike organizations that represent a truly isolated interest, the motives of the Anarchists, while unconventional, could have easily been embraced under the right conditions by a public tired of the preferential treatment afforded the intelligentsia and political elite. However, as Novak notes, “The fact that anarchism came to be associated in many minds with terrorism and violence is undoubtedly one of the reasons … for its lack of success as a social and political ideology and movement.” Slowly, the movement faded, as World War I dominated the public consciousness. Nearly 70 years later, a “new” type of terrorist organization faced a similar dilemma.

The Modern Political Terrorist: Analyzing The Munich Massacre

During the 1972 Olympic games in Munich, Germany, a hostage crisis involving members of the Israeli Olympic team disrupted the games and captured the attention of the global media, intensifying the conflict between Israel and Palestine. While it is impossible to conclusively assess the role of the media in the escalation of the conflict, visual communications

76 Novak, 177.
77 Laqueur, 20-21.
78 Novak, 179.
79 Fowler, 741, 744.
80 Novak, 179.
81 Laqueur, 21.
undeniably played a central role in the incident, as the power of live images, in conjunction with a violent act, expanded the realm of the modern terrorist and the range of his impact. As such, the Munich Massacre embodies several elements of the strategies employed by the current iteration of terrorism. The following analysis of the attack, its motives, and origins, however, all differentiate this act from its modern-day contemporaries. Thus, the Munich Massacre serves as a classic example of traditional mid-century political terrorism, an act committed for very specific, concrete purpose, in which the act itself is merely a vehicle to achieve said end.

In consideration of the origins of the Munich Massacre, one finds that the history of the attack extends to the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, given the religious background of the participants. Admittedly, a detailed exploration of this history unlocks the nuances of the conflict; however, while religion spurred the conflict historically, the politics of the Jewish state and its interactions with Palestine serve as the immediate origins of the conflict. Therefore, from a modern historical perspective, the origins of Black September and their plot serve as the basis for this evaluation. Linked to the PLO, Black September was the “…assassination organization responsible for the massacre at the Munich Olympic games,”

82 drawing support, “…from Fatah, the PLO fighting unit, and also from other Palestinian groups working under the PLO umbrella.”

83 However, this connection does not, in itself, account for the attack. Rather, the motivation for the attack stemmed from the exclusion of Palestine from the 1972 Olympic Games, deeply offending several members of Black September, which ultimately led to the planning and execution of the attack.

84 Once again, the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

83 Dobson and Payne, 13.
comes into play, as the exclusion escalated already heightened tensions within Palestine. Yet, despite the international nature of the attack, the planning itself occurred in a fairly isolated fashion, as Simon Reeve points out in his description of the initial planning session based on his interviews with the surviving terrorist. According to Reeve, “The origins of the plot have always been vague, but they can now be traced back to the beginning of July 1972, and a café terrace in the picturesque Piazza della Rotonda in Rome."85 Here Abu Iyad, Abu Doud, and Fakhri al Umari, in response to the news of the Palestinian exclusion from the 1972 games, proposed the plan of a hostage mission, ultimately intended to facilitate the release of several imprisoned “colleagues,” which, from a planning perspective, deviates sharply from the carefully planned and structured missions of the modern terrorist organization. Despite this impromptu style, the mission ultimately came together, becoming a highly researched and planned operation, conducted under the guidance of “… Luttif Afif (“Issa”), a Palestinian militant born in Nazareth.”87 Abu Iyad (one of the three men originally present in Rome the summer prior to the attack) selected the primary participants from young, poor, Lebanese, Syrian, and Jordanian fedayeen, settling on Afif Ahmed Hamid, Ahmed Chic Thaa, Khalid Jawad, Adnan Al-Gashey, Mohammed Safady, and Jamal Al-Gashey.88

Tactically, a majority of the group familiarized themselves with the Olympic complex weeks ahead of time, while the two leaders, “… Issa and his deputy, “Tony” (real name, Yusuf Nazzal),”89 had lived in Germany for years prior to the attack, fully integrated into the regional culture. Dressed in tracksuits to blend in with the other athletes roaming the Olympic grounds,

85 Reeve, 39.
86 Reeve, 40.
87 Reeve, 40.
88 Reeve, 41.
89 Reeve, 2.
the terrorists entered the residential area and reviewed their jobs in the operation before moving on to their target building, 31 Connollystrasse. After an initial struggle with their soon to be captives, the attackers quickly overpowered the Israeli athletes, with only one athlete escaping through a window before they gained control of the situation. They then moved to an adjoining apartment, again capturing all of its occupants, less one (Tsabari) who escaped by way of an underground exit. All told, two of the Israeli captives were killed in the takeover, both allegedly the result of attempts to overpower their captors. Despite this, Reeve makes a point to note that “According to Abu Daoud, a Black September commander and one of the Palestinian militants who planned and organized the attack, the terrorists never had any specific instructions to open fire on the hostages.”

Given this assertion, one must evaluate the true motives of Black September in carrying out the operation. Had the mission stemmed purely from the exclusion of Palestinian athletes from the games, an execution would presumably not be out of the question, but the terrorists wanted more. Instead, the terrorists demanded “the release of 234 prisoners held in Israeli jails and two from German prisons …” with the threat that non-compliance would result in the execution of hostages. Following several rounds of negotiations, the German officials convinced the terrorists to extend their deadlines long enough to create a plausible plan to resolve the conflict and save the hostages. Their efforts resulted in Operation Sunshine, a Hollywood style rescue involving the infiltration of the building by way of its ventilation shafts, at which point the German officials were to disarm the Black September terrorists and free the

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90 Reeve, 3.
91 Reeve, 4-5.
92 Reeve, 6-8.
93 Reeve, 8.
94 Reeve, 14.
hostages. Under the best of circumstances, the plan was optimistic; however, the German team had several factors working against them, most significantly the news media covering the events. As the Germans prepared for the entry, the terrorists inside the building had a bird’s eye view of their activities via the televisions within the apartments, eliminating the element of surprise essential to the rescue effort, thereby forcing the German’s to stall long enough to formulate an alternative plan. Fortunately, at the suggestion of one of the hostages, Issa decided that rather than deal with the Germans directly, he would move the group to Egypt via a German provided aircraft, where he could safely negotiate without fear of an attack. This change allowed German officials to plan what was to be a dramatic rescue, drawing Issa and the terrorists out once they reached the airport, at which point waiting snipers would incapacitate the terrorists. Unfortunately, the plan failed to achieve its primary objective, instead resulting in the death of several terrorists and all of the Israeli captives.

Thus, Black September joined the ranks of countless other terrorist organizations who cost the lives of innocent civilians in the pursuit of their cause. The significance of this tragedy, however, lies in the motivations of the organization and the extraneous factors that played a decisive role in its outcome. In sharp contrast to the terrorist cells of the 21st century, this incident, while ideologically grounded, centered on a concrete goal outlined by the organization – a goal that was a function of its larger overall purpose. The Israeli captives served a greater role than sacrificial lambs to be slaughtered in a public display designed to attract attention. They were a means to a strategic end, a practical method by which the organization might liberate some of its own in exchange for the lives of its enemy. In this case, Black September’s

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95 Reeve, 86-87.
96 Reeve, 81.
97 Reeve, 105-108.
values did not dictate a primal conflict in which the destruction of all opposing factions served the greater cause; the conflict between the two parties was such that negotiation and interaction between one another did not violate their fundamental goals. Compared to the modern terrorist, this notion seems foreign and impossible, a dangerous assumption on the part of the opposition. However, the difference between mid-century terrorism and its current incarnation is thin at best, forcing the observer to carefully define the motives of each organization in order to elicit a clear explanation for what one implicitly feels when confronted with both types of organizations. It is this conflict that the following chapters will address, specifically, those factors that differentiate the modern terrorist movement from its predecessors.

Therefore, reflecting on both the Anarchists and the Black September, one finds numerous examples of precedents set that reappear in what is popularly considered a new form of terrorism. For the Anarchists, the use of grand attacks such as political assassination as a means to both grab the public’s attention and shift its support reappear prominently in the attacks on the world trade center, just as the Munich Crisis resonates each time Osama Bin Laden uses the power of the media to convey a set of demands to the world. However, one must take care not to succumb to the desire to identify the historical precedent for each aspect of modern terror as a means to define its innovation. To the contrary, such examples merely deride the notion of “new terrorism” in the first place. Instead, by identifying the central elements represented in new terrorism and exploring their historical origin, one may correctly identify deviations from these pre-established norms in an effort to uncover that which is truly new.
Chapter 3: The Origins of Modern Terror

Unlike its historic counterparts, modern terrorism presents a unique challenge for the observer. The nature of its violence and the tactics employed to that end are largely the same; however, the proximity to the observer unavoidably colors one’s judgment, inhibiting a truly impartial study. When asked to evaluate the status of modern terrorism, the initial human response pushes for a unique characterization, idealizing the modern incarnation of psychological violence, searching for characteristics that reaffirm one’s internal beliefs. By its very nature, terrorism lends itself to this biased point of view, shifting its form throughout history in order to adapt to the modern circumstances, and in the process giving the impression that terrorism itself has changed in a substantial way. Yet, to accept this superficial change as a fundamental shift in the nature of terrorism ignores the core structure of a terrorist organization. Instead, one must ignore the tactics and technologies and focus on the dynamics of the government-cell relationship in an attempt to elicit a motive and a sound basis for comparison of “modern” terrorism with its historic predecessors.  

From an American perspective, September 11th polarized the international community, shocking the world with the magnitude of the attack and the innovative tactics of its perpetrators, drastically refocusing the nation’s attention back toward the threat of an international aggressor. Yet, while a convenient marker of a new era in international relations, 9/11 does not reflect a radical shift in the international threat environment. Some overemphasize the inherence of the conflict, suggesting that terrorism is a result of a culture clash between the American global ideology of liberalism, and the traditional, religiously focused Islamic society. However, while this sense of competition certainly exists, the roots of today’s Islamist terrorist movement stem

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back to U.S. policy decisions made within the Cold War framework, providing the subtext for today’s clash between radical Islam and the West. Thus, the significance of modern, or grand terrorism extends well beyond the confines of a U.S. response and demands a retrospective look at the events leading up to 9/11. The presidencies of George H. W. Bush and William J. Clinton provide a solid framework for such a review, isolating a potentially expansive set of conflicts relevant to the interplay of modern terrorist organizations and the West. By focusing one’s attention not only on each historical example of terrorist acts from a given period, but on the political context for said acts, the study forces the researcher to extend his analysis beyond a local analysis of the terrorism itself. U.S. domestic, as well as international, politics are increasingly relevant as are the means and tactics employed to combat terror. The use of a presidential term frees the observer from relying on hypotheticals, instead tracing the actions of a given administration to the historical events that triggered a terrorist response. Presidents Bush and Clinton specifically offer a broad range of engagements for study that reflect not only present concerns, such as 9/11, but conflicts extending back to the Cold War, further emphasizing the historical interconnection of modern terror.

Grand Terrorism Defined

Within this framework, Robert Art’s notion of grand strategy and grand terrorism serve as the basis for analysis. Art defines grand terrorism both ideologically and materially, distinguishing politically motivated terrorist groups from their religiously based contemporaries and reminding the reader of the now dominant status enjoyed by the United States.\(^\text{99}\) Tactically, these distinctions result in two fundamentally different challenges for U.S. leadership as compared with a traditional terrorist threat. The conventional terrorist maintained goals that

were “strictly political, precisely defined, and directed toward specific goals such as ending political repression and economic injustice for a group, or attaining statehood for an ethnic minority.”

While similar to the grand terrorists of today, this traditional motivation limited the means terrorists would employ to achieve their goals. From a practical perspective, committing suicide in order to save political comrades made little sense; yet, ideologically, the goal was to captivate the attention of the international community without creating “a political backlash that would hurt their cause.”

The decision-making patterns of conventional terrorists closely followed those of nation-states, rationally evaluating an attack based upon its ability to achieve a materially based end. Conversely, grand terrorism disregards this traditional framework of terrorism, pursuing the preponderance of an ideology and rejecting the dominant political and social structure that formerly made negotiation possible, resulting in Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations. However, this clash does not preclude all rationality. Regardless of presumed civilizational incompatibility, one must evaluate the motivations for grand terrorism through an historical analysis, questioning the foundations of the competing ideology’s clash with the West and evaluating governmental performance on the basis of material acts to abate the inevitable ideological clash. For Art, the motivation for conflict stems from a perception of threat. Given a series of historical events, two fundamentally different groups now perceive each other as threatening their existence. This provides a minimal framework with which to evaluate both the conflict itself as well as the performance of the U.S. in moderating the effects of grand terrorism.

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100 Art, 16.
101 Art, 16.
102 Art, 18.
**Historical Contextualization**

Applying Art’s methodology, one must first evaluate the role of the United States in the Middle East extending back to the Iranian Revolution before determining the success or failure of Clinton or Bush with respect to their policies on grand terrorism. Arguably, the relevant history of grand terrorism stems back to the 11th Century. However, maintaining Art’s methodology of evaluating the source of conflict, rather than that of the movement as a whole, a historical evaluation from the revolution forward provides sufficient background as to the heritage of the current clash.

As such, the Iranian Revolution serves as the starting point for U.S. – Middle Eastern affairs, reflecting both the ideological climate of the era that led the United States to become involved in the region, as well as a material catalyst for conflict. Prior to the revolution, Iran’s relationship with the United States played a central role in the U.S. strategy of Soviet containment. To this end, President Truman began a program of “significant US involvement in Iran’s internal affairs …,” ultimately “toppling” Prime Minister Mussadiq and installing the Shah. In a similar fashion, President Nixon employed the Shah as “the regional protector for the West.” Yet, despite this close alliance between the U.S. and Iran, the relationship ultimately undermined the legitimacy of the Shah, fostering the conditions requisite for revolution. Combining this environment with the Shah’s massive threatening military buildup that drew resources away from domestic programs, Khomeini capitalized on the situation, painting the arms deals between the U.S. and Iran as schemes by which the U.S. would receive

104 Watkins, 7.
105 Watkins, 8.
Beyond the direct consequences of the 1979 revolution and subsequent installation of Khomeini, the massive military buildup combined with the openly hostile Shi’ite regime now in place, Saddam Hussein faced a highly threatening regional environment. “For Iraq, the perceived threat of Muslim zealotry was a primary catalyst in President Saddam Hussein’s decision to invade Iran.” Thus, one may trace the U.S. involvement with Iran and Iraq to the region’s decay and eventual destabilization.

In a similar fashion, U.S. involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War reflected a general “lack of a long-term political strategy,” resulting in a region of little interest to the U.S. at the time, but of great significance to those affected by the U.S. role in the region. The region drew “Islamic fighters from many different countries,” providing them not only with an environment that fostered their ideals, but in which the U.S. supported their immediate mission: the defeat of the Soviet Union. Seeing their own success, the fighters sustained the tactics learned during the U.S. Soviet rollback period of the 1980s, organizing themselves under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden. Yet, why did Bin Laden ultimately turn on the United States, given the support the nation provided his efforts? Given his stated claims against the U.S., it is clear that in addition to the perceived imperialism of the United States, the first Gulf War played a significant role in shaping Middle Eastern public opinion.

While seemingly minor concerns to U.S. interests at the time, the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Soviet-Afghan War each added to the perception of the United States as

107 Pelletiere, 14.
110 Art, 19.
111 Art, 88.
112 Art, 19.
an imperialist power, such that by the late 1980s, “regardless of the act, the hand of Western imperialism is seen to be behind it.”\(^{113}\) Employing these perceptions of the United States, Saddam Hussein successfully negotiated the ideological Gulf War against the U.S., garnering support from former enemies on the basis of an ideology his government fundamentally opposed.\(^{114}\) The seemingly irrelevant diplomatic choices made at the peak of the Cold War served as the basis for the modern problem of Islamist grand terrorism, evident in the regional “anticolonial sentiment,”\(^{115}\) and the consensus regarding the Israel-Palestine question.\(^{116}\) Therefore, while evaluating Bush and Clinton with respect to their treatment of grand terrorism, these issues serve as a barometer for the success of their foreign policies.

*The Trials of President George H. W. Bush and Their Consequences*

For President Bush, the international threat environment differed minimally from that faced by his predecessors, demanding a significant focus on the threat of the Soviet Union despite its obvious decline. The question of grand terrorism had not yet developed beyond local dissonance within the Middle East. Thus, one could argue that his grand strategy changed little from that of his predecessors, focusing on the traditional structure of power politics in determining foreign policy. As such, Robert Art suggests the Bush administration took a dominion style approach, citing the Pentagon’s 1992 Defense Planning Guidance as evidence of Bush’s desire to maintain U.S. superiority, both through military production as well as


\(^{114}\) Please note that the “ideological Gulf War” refers to the propaganda used by Saddam Hussein to create animosity in the Middle East toward the United States.


\(^{116}\) Telhami, 441.
preventing potential competitors from threatening the interests of the United States.\textsuperscript{117} However, Art’s evaluation hinges on the policy positions of the Bush administration toward the end of his presidency, reflecting a grand strategy shaped by the recent Gulf War and still adapting to an international community without the Soviet Union. Others criticize the administration for lacking a grand strategy at all, interpreting the lack of a polarizing issue as the absence of an overarching framework for action. Despite this, one must reflect on the circumstances of Bush’s presidency, recognizing that within the reactive policies dealing with both the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War, Bush maintained a consistent diplomatic perspective that focused on a personal approach to foreign policy. He favored moderation, as opposed to radical action.\textsuperscript{118} Thus, the analysis of grand strategy provides a limited evaluation of Bush’s success in dealing with grand terrorism; instead, one must define those events during his presidency relevant to the eventual eruption of grand terror and evaluate Bush’s role in their abatement or perpetuation.

Unlike the U.S. conflict with the Soviet Union, the Gulf War represented the first of a series of battles that sharply deviated from the standard models of aggression, instead relying on historical events wrapped with religious ideology as a tactic of war. As such, President Bush faced an unique international threat that required both the successful removal of Saddam from Kuwait and a diplomatic stance that could allay the potential backlash from an historically hostile set of Arab nations sympathetic to Saddam’s cause. Superficially, the conflict appeared extremely secular, led by the Ba’thist Saddam in an effort to prop up his nation’s declining

\textsuperscript{117} Art, 88-89.
economy\textsuperscript{119} by inducing reduced Kuwaiti oil production, thereby stabilizing the price of oil, which would help to reduce the debts from the Iran-Iraq War.\textsuperscript{120} However, in a brilliant diplomatic move, Saddam played to the historical animosity between the West and Islamic states of the Middle East, stemming back to both British and French imperialism as well as the regional conflicts incurred as a result of the U.S. desire to contain the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{121}

“On the eve of battle, he [Saddam] rallied his senior commanders by emotionally invoking God as the architect of the imminent war,”\textsuperscript{122} in an attempt to capitalize on the power of religion as it related to the popular perception of Iraq’s soon to be adversary, the United States. Serving as the foundation for Saddam’s claims, the past actions of the U.S. within the Middle East, in addition to the nation’s strong support for Israel, established the notion that the American brand of democracy inherently threatened the survival of religious Islamic regimes. With the end of the Cold War, these perceived threats became ever more serious, as an unchecked America posed what some Middle Eastern nations perceived to be a severe threat to their existence.\textsuperscript{123} Saddam played to these fears, calling for Arab solidarity in an effort to counter the perceived American, and subsequently Israeli, threat to the region.

Given this Islamic redefinition, the policies pursued by the Bush Administration directly reflect the President’s ability to effectively negotiate the conflict and demand a greater understanding of the ideological implications for U.S. action within the region. Thus, Bush established the need for a multilateral approach from the beginning of the conflict, immediately

\textsuperscript{120} Pauly, 43.
\textsuperscript{121} Pelletiere, 3.
\textsuperscript{122} Piscatori, 18.
\textsuperscript{123} Telhami, 442.
calling on the U.N. Security Council “for a resolution condemning Iraq’s invasion.”

More importantly, the administration recognized the long-term significance of the conflict, not only in terms of Iraq’s potential to control a large share of the region’s oil reserves, but the potential for similar aggressive acts if other nations perceived no meaningful consequences to Iraq’s actions. Attempting to avoid provoking the hostilities of the non-combatant nations within the region, Bush went to great lengths to build support for military intervention not only within the United Nations, but to form a coalition among the regional players. Employing his desire for personal diplomacy, the president directly engaged with several Middle Eastern nations including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, again in an effort to avoid the effects of the religious propaganda incited by Saddam. Bush then broadened the scope of his diplomatic efforts, engaging not only the Middle East, but “Western European, Soviet, and Japanese leaders” strengthening the coalition, which once established, allowed the U.S. to call for a U.N. resolution authorizing the use of military force. Thus, given such extensive and carefully planned preparations, one may conclude that Bush dealt an ideological blow to religious extremism and grand terrorism.

Yet, despite Bush’s efforts, the Gulf War left an indelible mark on the Middle Eastern region. Critics accuse Bush of failing to execute when given the chance to remove Saddam, instead choosing to withdraw in accordance with the 100-day time frame. However, such a contention provides little room for analysis as it relies on counterfactual presumptions well

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124 Pauly, 44.
125 Pauly, 45.
126 Pauly, 46.
127 Pauly, 46.
128 Pauly, 46, 52.
beyond reasonable extrapolation. In his book, *A World Transformed*, former President Bush addresses this concern, stating,

[trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq, would have violated our guideline about not changing objectives in midstream, engaging in “mission creep,” and would have incurred incalculable human and political costs. Apprehending him was probably impossible. … We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq. The coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under those circumstances, there was no viable “exit strategy” we could see, violating another of our principles. … Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land.]

Thus, one must evaluate President Bush’s ability to achieve the objectives of the coalition without perpetuating the perceived American hegemonic threat and while neutralizing Israel’s polarizing influence. From a strategic perspective, Bush handled the Israel problem beautifully; convincing Prime Minister Shamir not to engage Iraq greatly reduced the weight of the religious dimension on conflict. Even Bush’s decision to withdraw prior to the expulsion of Saddam reflects a degree of diplomatic awareness with respect to grand terrorism. Recognizing “that once the coalition had achieved its principle objective – the ejection of Saddam’s forces from Kuwait – that entity would lose its source of sustenance.”

Unfortunately, regardless of Bush’s best efforts, regional powers managed to employ the benign American presence as a call to action nearly ten years later. The problem stems back to Saddam’s politicization of the conflict, drawing on the historical investments of the region, specifically regarding the interaction between the traditional elements of Middle Eastern society and the West. “Saddam had a natural constituency on the Muslim streets.”

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130 Pauly, 59.

131 Piscatori, 31.
convinced of the danger of the evils of Israel and its close alliances with the U.S., the threat of U.S., and subsequently Israeli, domination of the region appears extremely real.\textsuperscript{132} Thus, to expect an engagement absent of any negative repercussions, politically or otherwise, devalues the significance of the western role within the Middle East. As Osama Bin Laden condemns the U.S. for its incursion into the holy land, one must ask what recourse Bush left on the table to avert future anti-Americanism, given the extensive emphasis he placed upon multilateralism and religious legitimacy within the region, specifically in Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{133} The overall success of Operation Desert Storm serves as a testament to the diplomatic attentiveness of the Bush Administration with respect to grand terrorism, and despite the truly inevitable backlash against U.S. involvement, the result was a net security gain during the early 1990s for both the region and the international community.

\textit{The Emergence of the New Era}

In light of the unique threat environment of the mid-1990s, a clear evaluation of President Clinton’s tenure in office is elusive. Unlike his predecessor, Clinton’s “war” did not define the nation’s actions, forcing independent judgments as to which events and policies are of greatest importance, and thus should serve as reference points in evaluating Clinton’s performance. After considering Clinton’s personal strategy toward foreign policy, a careful study of his material policies regarding grand terror and his appreciation of the ideological significance of religious fundamentalism provide a solid basis for evaluation. Thus, while successful in maintaining a period of relative peace for the U.S. and its allies, the success of the Clinton administration is in

\textsuperscript{132} Telhami, 442.
\textsuperscript{133} Watkins, 10.
many ways overstated, overlooking the manifestation of anti-American sentiment, the costs of inaction, and dangers of “a strategy of [democratic] enlargement.”134

From the outset, the Clinton Presidency openly avoided foreign policy, favoring domestic political concerns over international activism, a result of Clinton’s “little knowledge about foreign policy.”135 However, Clinton’s disdain for foreign policy went well beyond the whining he became known for amongst his policy advisors, incorporating both the structure of his government and his staff selections into a carefully planned scheme to avoid unnecessary foreign involvement.136 This notion of escape defines the inherent difference between the Bush and Clinton administrations. Where Bush actively pursued personal relations with key nations, Clinton withdrew from the international sphere in what he presumably interpreted as the safe stance. He errantly assumed that with a limited U.S. engagement, the opportunities for international aggression would naturally decrease, displaying a general lack of understanding regarding grand terrorism and the historic realities that mandated U.S. involvement. Just as they influenced Bush, the Middle Eastern conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s continued to shape American foreign policy: the ideological disdain for the United States persisted. Therefore, pursuing a policy of withdrawal did not solve the problem of radical aggression. The grievances against the U.S. were not purely military, but were concerns over the threat of U.S. intentions and alliances within the Middle East.

Unfortunately, the problems associated with a neglect of grand terrorism often do not manifest themselves until years after the fact. Considering Clinton’s treatment of minor foreign policy crises such as Somalia or Bosnia, however, one finds a president unwilling to firmly

136 Halberstam, 168, 262.
establish a foreign policy, much less engage regions without compelling U.S. political interests or domestic demand. David Halberstam pointedly makes note of such an instance, referring to the U.S. involvement in Somalia as a method “of doing something humanitarian but, equally important, of not sending troops to Bosnia, a place that … was far more dangerous.”

Ultimately, this tactic failed, as the Bosnian Conflict eventually pulled Clinton in. Even once engaged, however, Clinton remained hesitant. Unwilling to anger American allies, Clinton deviated from the traditional U.S. foreign policy model of “outlin[ing] the new policy to the Europeans in terms that they would be forced to deal with,” instead selecting a modest, informative, stance that resulted in a stalemate and inaction.

As his first term progressed, Clinton began to realize the need for foreign policy involvement, grudgingly accepting his role as the leader of the free world and mediator of international conflict. Yet, even beyond his recognition of the need for American international involvement, Clinton began to feel the effects of grand terrorism during the year leading up to his re-election campaign. While he handled the 1993 World Trade Center bombing as a law enforcement issue, limiting the scope of the U.S. response to bringing the perpetrators to justice, the 1995 bombing of the Riyadh National Guard Building and the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers forced Clinton to recognize grand terrorism, and specifically Osama Bin Laden, as significant threats to U.S. interests. Yet, despite this recognition, the U.S. failed to respond

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137 Halberstam, 251.
138 Halberstam, 226.
directly to the Khobar Towers incident, shifting its forces to the Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia.\footnote{Watkins, 11.}

Fortunately, as Saddam returned to an uncooperative posture with respect to U.N. weapons inspectors, Clinton reflected on the Khobar Towers bombing, thus reserving the right to use force against Saddam, “if Iraq did not comply [with U.N. resolution 687].”\footnote{Michael Knights, Cradle of Conflict: Iraq and the Birth of Modern U.S. Military Power (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 161, 337.} Benefiting from Congressional support, Clinton felt emboldened to act, despite the uncertain legality of a U.S. strike against Iraq,\footnote{Ryan Hendrickson, The Clinton Wars: The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), 150.} manipulating the language of Resolution 1154 to fit U.S. interests.\footnote{Hendrickson, 152.} True to his word, Clinton responded when Iraq continued to reject “UNSCOM’s authority,”\footnote{Hendrickson, 153.} but despite support from the Congress, Clinton lacked the international support enjoyed by the Bush administration during Operation Desert Storm.\footnote{Hendrickson, 154.} While it is possible that this was simply a miscalculation by Clinton, the notion that a president historically so cautious would act so abruptly, raises questions both about the effectiveness of the pre-strike planning, and the motives of the Clinton administration in striking Saddam. Perhaps a strike would allow the administration to avoid Saddam’s historic pattern of violation followed by compliance as soon as an American threat becomes imminent.\footnote{Hendrickson, 155.} \footnote{Knights, 199.}

However, as Operation Desert Fox unfolded, two problems began to develop, raising questions as to the value of the operation and its role within the larger context of grand
terrorism. Similar to the recent invasion of Iraq, there was a general question as to “what the administration’s expectations had been at the outset of Desert Fox.” While elimination of WMD was a potential explanation, the strike on Iraq could provide Saddam with justification for expelling the U.N. weapons inspectors, providing him with free reign to rebuild his programs after a U.S. cease-fire. Alternatively, regime change offered a viable explanation for the U.S. actions, given the selection of targets within Iraq. Yet, while this policy never materialized, the international response it elicited raises significant questions regarding Clinton’s appreciation for the ideological components of grand terror. Many Arabs within the Middle East viewed the operation as a U.S. double standard, “imposing a stiff punishment on Iraq for noncompliance with UN resolutions, while condoning Israeli noncompliance on other UN resolutions.”

Therefore, despite Clinton’s eventual willingness to engage Saddam and address the problems associated with grand terrorism, his underlying disinterest in foreign affairs limited the ability of the government to properly address the concerns of the Middle Eastern nations, exacerbating the real issue, the perception of the U.S. by the Islamist community.

On February 22, 1998, as tensions between the United States and Iraq reached new heights over Iraq’s refusal to comply with the United Nations Special Commission on weapon inspections, Bin Laden publicized a fatwa, or religious decree, calling for strikes against all U.S. citizens and military personnel anywhere in the world.

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148 The correlation between Operation Desert Fox and Grand Terrorism is not a suggestion that Operation Desert Fox was an example of Grand Terrorism, but merely that U.S. action in the region as a result of Operation Desert Fox could have implications for Grand Terrorism.

149 Knights, 206.

150 Knights, 209.

151 Knights, 206-7.


153 Again, this is not to suggest that Saddam Hussein is a component of Grand Terror, but that any U.S. action regarding Iraq has implications for Grand Terror and the United States.

154 Hendrickson, 102.
As such, Clinton’s actions require further analysis from an ideological perspective, determining not only his willingness to address the threat of grand terror, but his ability to successfully negotiate the historical factors that determine the perceptions of U.S. actions in the Middle East today.

While the bombing of the World Trade Center and the Khobar Towers or Operation Desert Fox all represent significant components to American foreign policy, the current security climate reduces their significance in terms of the overall American security concerns. Each event contributes to the U.S. security position; however, to assert that a particular campaign or terrorist attack offers a conclusive solution or explanation for American grand strategy narrows the scope of the problem. Rather than simply focusing on the material actions of the U.S. within the Middle East, one must look at the ideological significance of each event and, more specifically, the propaganda value they provide for opponents of the United States. Thus, the prevention of terrorism is fundamentally not a policing issue, as such a mission would demand an unrealistic set of accomplishments to guarantee the security of the U.S. Instead, one must evaluate a leader’s cognizance of a crisis’ impact on ideology in addition to the conventional, material, consequences. To this end, President Clinton’s Israel policy serves as an effective indicator of his performance in dealing with the grand terrorist threat, eliminating the variables associated with direct threats to the U.S. and linking his performance with his understanding of the ideological and historical conflicts central to the Middle East.

Returning to the recent historic events in the region, the rise of Khomeini marked a crucial turning point for U.S. relations in the Middle East, as did the resultant scrutiny of the close relationship between the U.S. and Israel. Unlike the Shah, Khomeini was staunchly “anti-
American [and] anti-Israeli,” placing the U.S. in a difficult diplomatic position even after Khomeini’s death, as his policies served “as an inspiration to other Islamists in the region and beyond.” Even today, Bin Laden continues to refer to the U.S. alliance with Israel as one of the causes for Islamist aggression. As Shibley Telhami notes, “the Palestinian issue remains at the core of every major Arab, Islamic, and anti-western political movement, providing the lens through which Arabs view the world.” Therefore, when dealing with Israel-Palestine relations, one must evaluate the success of negotiations from a broad perspective, evaluating the ability of U.S. leadership to conduct talks in a fashion that does not degrade American efforts in the Middle East.

However, even before his presidency began, Clinton, like most of his predecessors since Lyndon Johnson, took a decidedly pro-Israel stance, criticizing the Bush Administration for being “anti-Israeli,” and while he followed the presidential pattern of avoiding such radical policies once in office, the very suggestion of a strongly pro-Israel stance is enough to cause serious diplomatic trouble. Unlike Bush’s “even-handed approach,” Clinton demonstrated a sharp pro-Israel bias from the start of his term, despite a general inaction by the administration, a byproduct of Clinton’s general aversion to foreign policy at the beginning of his presidency. Unfortunately for Clinton, the climate of peace and progress would not last as the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin marked the beginning of a period of violence between Israel and

155 Watkins, 6.
156 Watkins, 6.
157 Watkins, 10.
158 Telhami, 441.
160 Hadar, 64.
161 Hadar, 62.
162 Rugh, 134.
Palestine and diplomatic backtracking. By 1998, Clinton decided to invest further into the peace process, engaging both Arafat and Netanyahu in diplomatic negotiations aimed at developing a peace agreement between the two nations. Therefore, despite a positive start, the trademark delayed engagement of the Clinton administration failed to ensure the success of the Oslo accords, favoring the politically safe route of Israeli support, “play[ing] into the hands of those favoring the status quo.”

Beyond the strategic faults of the Clinton Administration, the danger of the Israel-Palestinian conflict lies in its symbolic meaning for the United States. Neither Israel nor Palestine are relevant threats to the United States, given their size and location; however, Clinton’s staunchly pro-Israel stance has been singled out by Islamists, evident in the rhetoric of both Saddam and Bin Laden. Thus, while a favorable policy toward Israel is acceptable, Clinton developed a relationship with Rabin far deeper than that of his predecessor, indirectly confirming the fears of many Middle Eastern Islamist regimes that viewed the dominance of the U.S. as transitive to Israel, should the two nations improve their ties. Thus, the special American-Israeli relationship ensured conflict between the Islamists and the United States, presuming America truly shared the interests of its ally. Furthering this perception,

Clinton … suggest[ed] that Israel … would remain a sacred, not-to-be-touched entitlement program that may actually expand in coming years … [and] that the aid package to Israel might even be expanded to “compensate” it for any possible “sacrifices” following the signing of a peace agreement.

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163 Rugh, 138-139.
164 Rugh, 139.
165 Hadar, 69.
166 Hadar, 62-63.
167 Hadar, 63.
Yet, if there was any doubt, Clinton’s condemnation of Arafat following the diplomatic breakdown in 2000 cemented U.S. support for Israel, and represented a significant red flag for Islamist Middle Eastern nations.\(^{168}\)

One must differentiate, however, between careless policymaking and the consequences of conflicted motivations within Middle Eastern politics. While President Clinton wholly supported Israel, as did all of his predecessors since the 1960s, his support was not without a considerable effort to reach a peace accord between the two nations. Clinton states in his book, *My Life*, that,

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\text{[i]n retrospect, the leaders’ decision to come may look easy. At the time, it was a gamble for both Rabin and Arafat, who couldn’t be sure how their people would react. Even if a majority of their constituents supported them, extremists on both sides were bound to be inflamed by the compromises on fundamental issues inherent in the Declaration of Principles.}^{169}\]

Clinton understood the dangers of associating with Rabin; yet, in this situation, the potential for peace between Israel and Palestine mandated action by the United States that would certainly draw negative attention by extremists both in support and opposed to the Oslo negotiations. His efforts not only brought the two nations closer to peace than ever before, but demonstrated that the two cultures could in fact work with one another. Unfortunately, due to the stubbornness of Arafat peace was not to be. In their discussion of the Camp David summit, Hussein Agha and Robert Malley state,

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\text{In accounts of what happened at the July 2000 Camp David summit and the following months of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations … Israel is said to have made a historic, generous proposal, which the Palestinians, once again seizing the opportunity to miss an opportunity, turned down. In short, the failure to reach a final agreement is attributed, without notable dissent, to Yasser Arafat.}^{170}\]

\(^{168}\) Rugh, 139.


From a traditional foreign policy perspective, Clinton’s positions with respect to Israel merely represent the policies of public allies, displaying their good faith for one another through military and diplomatic support. Unfortunately for the United States, within the context of grand terrorism, diplomatic engagements serve as the primary currency for measuring the threat of a target nation. According to “a former Egyptian ambassador to the United States: “Arabs are sick of their governments pathetically begging the U.S. to plead with Israel to please let them have peace.” Therefore, while Clinton took decisive action with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, his delayed entry further weakened his already difficult position on the issue, attempting to balance the Israeli coalition within U.S. domestic politics, while satisfying the demands of the international community for peace within the region. Overwhelmed, Clinton failed to properly account for the repercussions of his actions, presuming to a certain extent, that his policy decisions in the region would remain local, rather than becoming a rallying cry for the radical Islamist movement.

The international threat environment during Clinton’s presidency reflected a period in international politics unseen for nearly 50 years, a time void of a polarizing conflict that organized the interstate relations of the world. However, despite this absence, one cannot presume that the notion of ordering principles or diplomatic constraints disappeared entirely. Rather, grand terrorism subtlety became the Soviet replacement, growing out of a unipolar international environment and an alienated populace. For Clinton this resulted in a policy environment largely unexplored, requiring a president able to correctly redefine the rules of the game without drawing the ire of those outside the primary sphere of influence. To a degree, he

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171 Telhami, 443.
accomplished this goal with his programs for democratic enlargement,\textsuperscript{172} but Clinton’s inability to project the impact of his policies on grand terror ultimately limits the scope of his success.

However, any effort to codify the success of Bush or Clinton ultimately leads to a failure in logic similar to that of U.S. Middle Eastern policy during the Cold War. Paralleling the shift from conventional to grand terrorism, one can no longer define success in conventional terms, focusing on a lack of material negative consequences of an action as a positive indicator of success. Instead, the realities of grand terrorism require a culturally attuned approach, evaluating success by an administration’s ability to provide a multi-dimensional solution to a given foreign policy problem. Addressing the direct causes of conflict without consideration for regional culture or history merely resolves the symptoms of conflict while failing to consider the role of ideology in shaping public perception. Admittedly, the policy of an administration cannot cater to the whims of popular opinion; however, reflecting on Saddam’s de-secularization of the first Gulf War, regional popular perception requires consideration when establishing a foreign policy. Neither President Bush nor President Clinton decisively outperformed each other within this framework, as each leader presided over a fundamentally unique threat environment, both of which required concessions that, in retrospect, contributed to the emergence of grand terrorism. Yet, beyond this recognition of foreign policy parity, one must account for U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War before assigning blame for this new terrorist threat. Therefore, the Presidencies of George H. W. Bush and William J. Clinton represent more than a difficult era for U.S. foreign policy. They define the new international challenges that will serve as the standard of judgment for all future administrations, determining U.S. policy, and the success of the United States on the international stage.

\textsuperscript{172} “Clinton’s Foreign Policy,” \textit{Foreign Policy} 121 (2000): 18.
Chapter 4: Revising Popular Conceptions of New Terror

Modern terrorism as an academic concept is unique in that it reflects not only its collective history, but the emotional connection of the modern researcher to this abstract concept. In essence, the magnitude of the subject matter prohibits objectivity. Terrorism by nature is designed to elicit an emotional response, creating in the general public a sense of fear and harm that pervades all levels of culture. As such, a researcher who attempts to address terror as an academic topic is himself, a part of the essence of terror, as the bias reflected as an individual exposed to terrorism contributes to the topic at large. Therefore, defining terrorism extends well beyond a comprehensive historical narrative, requiring a careful distinction between the emotions that are historically relevant as the consequences of terrorism and emotional fabrications that merely reflect one’s proximity to a given horrific event. Subconsciously, the desire to vindicate the injustice of September 11th manifests itself in the willingness to extol the attacks as the worst incarnation of terrorism in history without a critical evaluation of their comparative effect. This raises the question of bias within modern scholarship on the subject. While one might study the variations in terrorism’s technology, organizational structure, motivation, or available funding, the sheer volume of variables overwhelms the study, rendering any conclusion impossible. Therefore, before one can answer the question of scale, he must first define those characteristics that define the terrorist, and differentiate a terrorist from a common criminal. Yet, even defining the essential elements of a terrorist organization faces the danger of situational bias. The following discussion addresses several categories of comparison commonly cited by those who claim the modern terrorist organization represents the height of terrorist aggression.
Similar to many modern political theorists, Colonel Russell Howard endeavours to define “new terrorism” by establishing six essential differences to compare the recent terrorist activities with those of “old terrorism,” or that of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Howard correctly identifies several features that unquestionably mark a paradigm shift in the nature of terrorist activity. However, his list also contains three commonly cited features that not only fail to mark a significant shift in terrorism, but also ignore the rich history surrounding terrorism as a form of political action. For this study, we will focus on Howard’s claim that the level of violence has increased, that technology has increased the terrorist threat, and that weapons of mass destruction amplify the threat of terrorist organizations.\(^{173}\) By employing not only the political terrorism of the late 20\(^{th}\) century, but also those organizations from the 11\(^{th}\) century, one may properly evaluate the extent to which terrorism has evolved and identify those factors critical to this evolution.

**Defining Terror**

The debate regarding the evolution of terrorism centers around a disagreement as to what constitutes a fundamental shift in terrorism, stemming back to a general deficiency regarding its definition. This is not to suggest that the traditional academic definition is incorrect, but that given the nature of terrorism, one cannot provide a general definition that sufficiently describes each era of terrorism. Commonly, terrorism involves the use of unconventional tactics to achieve a desired end against an often numerically and militarily superior adversary. Yet, based on this definition, terrorism merely exists in a continuous stream of violence, largely unchanged since the beginning of man’s conflict with one another. Instead, three general categories of behavior differentiate terrorist activities into eras, representing significant shifts from both a

tactical and ideological perspective. The first deals with the foundations of the terrorist organization, and its ability to persist amidst opposition. In his discussion of the Assassins, Bernard Lewis reminds the reader that for a terrorist organization to be successful, “There had to be an organization capable both of launching the attack and surviving the inevitable counter-blow.”\textsuperscript{174} Closely linked to this need for sustainability, the organization required more than a strong structure to sustain itself, “… there had to be a system of belief … to inspire and sustain the attackers to the point of death.”\textsuperscript{175} However, beyond the initial sustainability of the organization, due to ideological cohesion, a common ideology also serves to differentiate various terrorist eras; marking a change in both the issues at stake, and the ability of the organization to compromise these ideals in a negotiation. Tactical innovation provides the final factor in differentiating eras of terror. By its nature, the terrorist organization is invariably the disadvantaged player, a function of its existence to represent “… those who feel powerless seeking to undermine the perceived power of a targeted group.”\textsuperscript{176} Thus, their tactics speak volumes about both a particular organization’s strategy and ideology and their proposed adversaries. The ability to discern and exploit the weaknesses of the enemy in order to eliminate this oppositional advantage demands innovation, which in turn serves to define unique periods of terrorist activity.\textsuperscript{177} Using these criteria, one must re-evaluate the commonly cited factors that mark a shift in the nature of terrorism, specifically, the use of weapons of mass destruction, the increasing magnitude of violence, and the power of technology. By questioning if each of these

\textsuperscript{175} Lewis, 131.
\textsuperscript{177} Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, \textit{The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda} eds. Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 69.
factors marks a shift in the three elements of terrorism,\textsuperscript{178} one might concretely establish if these popular conceptions of new terrorism accurately represent reality.

\textit{Weapons of Mass Destruction}

One of the most commonly cited and feared scenarios concerns the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction by a terrorist organization. Without question, such an attack poses a significant threat to the interests of the United States, both in terms of physical destruction, and the psychological damage accompanied by such a dramatic act of violence. Yet, what makes the prospect of a WMD attack significantly more frightening than the use of conventional weapons? The impact zone for a WMD attack encompasses a large physical area, with the power to infect or destroy an entire city, in many cases a result of an initially undetectable substance. If the criteria for mass hysteria and general fear are simply magnitude and stealth, an attack on the technological infrastructure of the United States satisfies both requirements, theoretically afflicting an area much greater than a city and is wholly indefensible.\textsuperscript{179} One might hypothesize, given the public consciousness, that the value of a WMD attack is its recognizability, the psychological effect of an imminent attack as a method to disrupt the workings of society.

However, this conception of WMD fails to provide conclusive evidence as to how weapons of mass destruction substantially changed the nature of the terrorist threat from previous generations. For those arguing WMD define a new era of terrorism, the breakup of the former Soviet Union marks a crucial point in the evolution of terrorism’s history, as this provided a widely accessible source of illicit nuclear material necessary for a large-scale

\textsuperscript{178} The three elements of terrorism referred to here are: 1. the strength of the organization’s foundation, 2. the existence of a common ideology, and 3. the use of tactical innovation.  
Thus, according to those who subscribe to the WMD theory, “modern terrorism” began during the late 1980s. The relatively short time between September 11th and this proposed birth of new terrorism suggests a potential causality; however, such a conclusion presupposes that this tactical revolution gave rise to a fundamentally different notion of terrorism. In the February 24th, 1995 issue of *Science*, John H. Nuckolls addressed the subject of nuclear proliferation and terrorism, outlining “Four Nuclear Nightmares,” the fourth of which he defined as “Nuclear terrorism, that is, a ‘World Trade Center’ destroyed by a nuclear explosion.” Nuckolls saw the future of terrorism, correctly identifying the target: a highly symbolic and recognizable building in American culture, but failed to establish the means of attack. One must then question which aspect of Nuckolls’s prediction is more significant. While the detonation of a nuclear weapon in New York City would devastate the nation, would the subsequent effect substantially differ from that of 9/11? From this perspective WMD become largely irrelevant in defining eras of terrorist activity. The scale of the attack is the most significant element of 9/11, not the means. Critics may argue that this willingness to use massive force validates the threat of WMD, that unlike past terrorist organizations, the modern terrorist faces little retaliatory threat for using WMD as the modern terrorist lacks any meaningful

180 Howard, 81.
182 Nuckolls, 1112.
183 While WMD are certainly a significant factor in terms of national security, the argument here relates to whether WMD merit a fundamental change in the nature of terrorism. Weapons of mass destruction represent an extraneous factor, not in terms of their effects, but in the sense that they are merely a tool potentially employed by a terrorist. They only marginally relate to the three criteria for terrorist innovation in the sense that they represent a tactical shift. However, as noted, the true change in tactics is not the use of WMD, but the change in strategy that dictates a large-scale attack meets the needs of the modern terrorist organization.
184 Howard, 76.
connection to a political state.\textsuperscript{185} Accepting this assertion, the factor that marks a shift in
terrorism is not WMD, but the willingness to use extreme force, which as noted in chapters five
and six, is a function of the intersection between a religious sect and globalization.

\textit{Increasing the Magnitude of Violence}

Extending the logic surrounding a WMD centric era of terror, the next logical conclusion
leads to a definition on the basis of scale. Expanding beyond the means of attack (WMD), the
criterion of scale addresses both tactical innovation and the ideological goals of a terrorist
organization, questioning how said goals align with the chosen means. Howard summarizes this
notion, stating,

\begin{quote}
[i]n the past, ‘terrorists wanted a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead.’
‘Unlike the terrorists of the 1960s to the 1990s, who generally avoided high
casualty attacks for fear of the negative publicity they would generate, al Qaeda is
not in the least concerned by such matters.’ … ‘they want to destroy the table and
everyone sitting at it.’\textsuperscript{186}
\end{quote}

While logical, this theory hides more than it reveals. Beginning with the first portion, the nature
of a terrorist organization cannot be defined solely by its successes, but also by its intentions and
failures. During the 1990’s, Osama Bin Laden actively planned several attacks against the
United States, one of which would become the largest terrorist attack in U.S. history. The 1993
bombing of the World Trade Center, the 1995 bombing of a national guard building in Riyadh
Saudi Arabia, and the 2000 bombing of the U.S.S. Cole all originated from al Qaeda and bear the
trademarks of the 9/11 attack.\textsuperscript{187} Each attack subscribed to the theory of destroying the table,\textsuperscript{188}
designed to attract international attention. As seen in Nuckolls’s prediction, however, the notion

\textsuperscript{185} Howard, 82.
\textsuperscript{186} Howard, 76.
\textsuperscript{188} Howard, 76.
that any of these attacks warranted a redefinition of modern terrorism did not garner substantial consideration among the political science or policy community.

Despite the fact that a trend of increasing violence does not represent a fundamental shift in the nature of terrorist activity with respect to terrorism’s essential elements, an expanded view of history only further establishes this conclusion, revealing similar forms of terrorist activity since its inception. Reflecting on the human tendency to exemplify the hardship of the present over that of the past understandably biases any comparison; yet, during the 11th century in “Quhistan, near the current border between Iran and Afghanistan [. . .] in the town of Sava,” a conflict began which ultimately lead the Isma’ilis to mark Nizam al-Mulk, the grand vizier, for death. As a prominent figure at the time, such an act would unquestionably draw attention, but in the modern context, a single assassination appears benign in comparison with the wealth of massively destructive options available. However, the circumstances of the assassination as well as the significance of the grand vizier mitigate this difference. As Chaliand and Blin note, “… on October 16, 1092, during the month of Ramadan, was one of the great terrorist attacks of all time, and its contemporary impact was at least as great as that of the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand or the attacks of September 11, 2001, in their own eras.” This was not a situation in which the Isma’ilis were willing to deal with their adversaries, negotiating political objectives for the release of the grand vizier, but a terrorist act akin to the supposed new terrorism of the 21st century. To suggest that an increase in violence marks the beginning of a new era in terrorism succumbs to the biases of proximity and fails to sufficiently establish a change in any of the central elements of terrorism. Regardless, this shift in action, the desire to

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189 Chaliand and Blin, 65.
190 Chaliand and Blin, 66.
191 Chaliand and Blin, 66-67.
destroy the table,\textsuperscript{192} is a symptom of a legitimate change in the nature of modern terrorism. Stemming from a combination of de-secularization and globalization, both of which represent major shifts in the ideologies of the modern terrorist organization, the terrorist structure is unavoidably altered, forced to adapt to an entirely new set of conditions that truly merit a tactical shift and represent a “new terrorism.”

*The Power of Technology*

Paralleling the theory of increased violence, the notion of technology as a demarcating feature within terrorism’s history proves extremely appealing from a casual perspective. Unlike the previous explanations, technology seems to link an abundance of factors together, all of which enhance the ability of a terrorist network to exist, to persist in the face of opposition, and to carry out missions that less than 15 years ago would have been technically prohibitive. Homer-Dixon points out this connection, stating, “Little can be done, for instance, about terrorists’ inexorably rising capacity for violence. This trend results from deep technological forces that can’t be stopped without producing major disruptions elsewhere in our economies and societies.”\textsuperscript{193} The apparent interconnection between technology and expansive violence creates an irresistible combination, both technologically (WMD, advanced bomb-making techniques) and logistically, employing the modern conveniences society takes for granted to facilitate terrorist activities and sustainability. It would be invalid to discredit the notion that technology increased the efficiency and effectiveness of the terrorist organization. Instead, by unpacking the claims that technology defines modern terror and comparing them against the accepted framework for a terrorist model, one finds that while technology certainly impacts the execution of terrorism, it has not fundamentally changed the nature of the terrorist organization.

\textsuperscript{192} Howard, 76.
\textsuperscript{193} Homer-Dixon, 61.
In his discussion of the intersection between technology and terror, Homer-Dixon separates this intersection into two dimensions concerning the use of technology as a facilitator and the use of technology as a target.\(^{194}\) Beginning with terrorism’s role as a facilitator, Homer-Dixon discounts the notion that 9/11 was low tech, a mission accomplished with simply human lives and box cutters. Rather, he asserts, “… the box cutters were no more than the “keys” that allowed the terrorists to convert a high-tech means of transport into a high-tech weapon of mass destruction.”\(^{195}\) Further, the advancement of technology serves to increase the potential to weaponize the social environment.\(^{196}\) On a rudimentary level, according to Homer-Dixon, in addition to increasing the terrorist’s operational scale, technology streamlines the terrorist effort, providing cheap, powerful weapons and highly effective communication methods, allowing terrorist organizations to be more effective while remaining largely undetected.\(^{197}\) While valid, this analysis appears conventional and hardly worthy as a differentiating factor; however, Homer-Dixon’s discussion of technology as a target proves incredibly convincing and deserves serious attention with regard to its central premises. According to Homer-Dixon, the United States, along with the rest of modern society, faces an increasing risk of terrorism as a result of its own progress, more specifically, “… the growing complexity and interconnectedness of our modern societies; and … the increasing geographic concentration of wealth, human capital, knowledge, and communication links.”\(^{198}\) Intuitively, Homer-Dixon’s argument makes sense, proposing that as our web of dependence increases, so does the potential to disrupt daily life. Yet, this only addresses the immediate results of a disruption, ignoring the “nonlinear

\(^{194}\) Homer-Dixon, 53.
\(^{195}\) Homer-Dixon, 55.
\(^{196}\) Homer-Dixon, 54.
\(^{197}\) Homer-Dixon, 54.
\(^{198}\) Homer-Dixon, 55.
behavior,” and the large destructive capacity of even a small attack. According to Homer-Dixon,

[a] special investigative commission set up in 1997 by then U.S. President Bill Clinton reported that ‘growing complexity and interdependence, especially in the energy and communications infrastructures, create and increased possibility that a rather minor and routine disturbance can cascade into a regional outage.’200

In this sense, the very structures created by the United States serve as weapons, threatening the organization of our society. To compound the problem, “Not even all the police and military personnel in the United States would suffice to provide even rudimentary protection to this immense network.”201,202

As such, the argument for a technology enabling a new era of terrorist activity is perhaps the most plausible of the theories considered, but similar to its predecessors, the theory falls short of satisfying more than a basic tactical shift. Thus, while the targets have certainly changed since the time of the Isma’ilis, the essence of the goals of the modern terrorist remain the same. “Like Hasan, bin Laden could not hope to topple his adversary – in his case, the West or the United States – with a simple terrorist attack, whatever its nature. Nevertheless, like al Qaeda today, Hasan’s organization knew how to exploit the Achilles’ heel of the governing (Seljuk) power … to weaken his adversary and benefit his own movement.”203 The features of terrorism even on a tactical level remain unchanged apart from a different target, notwithstanding the ideological and organizational aspects of terrorist identity. Technology as a weapon merely enhances that which already exists, improving efficiency, but leaving the core values in tact. As David Rapoport contends, “The critical variable … cannot be technology: rather, the purpose

199 Homer-Dixon, 56.
200 Homer-Dixon, 56.
201 Homer-Dixon, 60.
202 The network referred to is the electrical transmission network.
203 Chaliand and Blin, 69.
and organization of particular groups and the vulnerabilities of particular societies to them are decisive factors.”

**Causal Intersection**

The question becomes how one might define modern terrorism broadly enough such that its characteristics represent a substantial shift in terrorist practices while maintaining a concise definition of terrorist activity. Considering the three factors that mark a shift in terror, a simple solution dismisses the notion of a new movement entirely, as the modern terrorist severely lacks originality, as its ideology, motivations, structure, and tactics all draw from elements of past terrorist movements. Yet the feeling that today’s version trumps its historical roots, in terms of scale, is hard to discount.

Rather than searching for a particular characteristic, one must consider the entire plane in which terrorism operates, recognizing not only those elements that provide definition, but the ways in which these changes in terrorism interact. Individually, the effects of globalization and the related changes in terrorism do not represent a fundamental paradigm shift that marks modern terror. Since the end of WWII, the United States played a leading role in the establishment and expansion of the global community and was regularly faced with policy challenges otherwise irrelevant without this interconnection of nations. This globalization did not go unnoticed by the terrorist community, as the 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s all saw increasing degrees of political terrorism made possible by the network of interests connecting the goals of the U.S. with those of partner nations around the world. Similarly, religion provides a glaring factor seemingly unique to modern terrorism, and a tempting explanation for its perceived

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205 The three elements of terrorism referred to here are: 1. the strength of the organization’s foundation, 2. the existence of a common ideology, and 3. the use of tactical innovation.
expansion of scope. But like globalization, religion also has precedent as a defining feature of terrorism as noted in chapter two.

The terrorists today are certainly familiar to political theorists; however, this current incarnation of international violence represents an intersection of two bygone eras. Combining the tactics and the power of religion harnessed first by the Assassins with the global climate of the mid-20th century political terrorism, the modern terrorist organization defines a unique period in the history of international violence. Captivating more than an isolated minority of the dispossessed, al Qaeda and its associates manipulate a broad spectrum of society, projecting this new influence by way of globalization, and forcing the most powerful nation in the world to take note through the image of destruction that remained locked on millions of televisions following the attacks of September 11th. The spectacular nature of the modern terrorist is more than a bias of proximity, more than a function of inflation, but is the result of an intersection between two historically violent conditions. In this sense, it is rather inappropriate to describe the current movement as new terrorism, given its history. Instead, one might borrow from Robert Art and redefine it “Grand Terrorism.” The following chapters will discuss the emergence of both factors and their interconnection to form Grand Terrorism.

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206 Homer-Dixon, 57-58.
Chapter 5: The Intersection of Religion and Globalization

With the end of the Cold War, the United States faced a threat environment unseen since 1918, in which the international power dynamic did not consist of great nations competing for dominance on the world stage. No longer could U.S. leaders define themselves as politicians and diplomats in relation to a ‘good versus evil’ ideological structure. The climate of the early 90s seemed to justify such a presumption and the resulting implication that the United States was now the uncontested leader of the international community. Yet, the broad notion of terrorism disrupted this peaceful dominance, replacing communism as a foil to the U.S., and served as a focal point for politicians and strategists. However, this demonization of terrorism commits a logical flaw, similar to that in assuming a single identifiable trait differentiates the terrorism of today from that of early 20th century Russia and France, or any other terrorist activity. As Robert Hutchings notes, in his discussion of terrorism as it relates to Kennan’s theories on the Soviet Union, “Terror is the tactic, not the adversary itself. To deal with terrorism over the longer term we must go beyond the symptoms of the problem to address its underlying causes ….”

Applying Hutchings’ logic one must avoid targeting the symptoms or tactics of terror as opposed to the fundamental elements that define a particular terrorist movement. Chapters one through three identified several significant terrorist movements throughout history, each of which defined a particular type of terrorist movement employing a variety of tactics and technology levels. Thus, the notion of terror itself is not new. Along the same lines, one cannot presume that a shift in terrorist activity originates in a superficial trend such as technological advancement or

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209 It should be noted that this is a common criticism of the Bush administration. The Global War on Terror takes a symptomatic approach toward U.S. foreign policy, publicly demonizing the notion of terrorism rather than the social or political factors that contribute to its predominance.
increased violence. Instead, a complete evaluation of modern terror requires an understanding of not only the terrorist organization but the circumstances in which it operates, isolating the features unique to the present environment that are uniquely conducive to terror. As David Rapoport notes, “The critical variable … cannot be technology: rather, the purpose and organization of particular groups and the vulnerabilities of particular societies to them are decisive factors.”

In addition to technology, several other factors including WMD, increasing violence, religion, and globalization are cited as potential explanations for the recent changes in the terrorist makeup. However, while technology, increasing violence, and WMD have historical examples in terrorism studies, one must question if any single factor can truly differentiate modern terror from its historic predecessors. To this end, the key is not the derivation of a new, undiscovered element, but recognizing that the present globalized environment, in conjunction with the use of radical Islamist doctrines, creates an environment conducive to the proliferation of terror in ways that are distinctly different from past movements.

A Brief History of the Origins of Islamist Extremism

With regard to the current era of “modern terror,” the Iranian Revolution serves as a solid starting point for the supposed East-West conflict, with the U.S. installed Shah acting as a

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211 For the purposes of this analysis, WMD shall be considered independent from the wider category of “technology” when discussing commonly cited shifts in terrorist activity. While WMD and the processes requisite to their development are unquestionably technological, their purported significance merits independent classification.
212 As a note to the reader, given the complex interactions of globalization and religion, this chapter seeks to clarify the basic elements of each as they relate to modern terror before discussing their interactions with one another.
representative of western policy.\footnote{213} After his installation, conflict surrounded the Shah’s rule, stemming from not only the removal of Prime Minister Mussadiq, but also the perception that Shah Reza Pahlavi’s government represented little more than a front for an American controlled regime.\footnote{214} Gradually the U.S. influence in Iranian policy, combined with several policy failures by the Shah resulted in his overthrow, at the urgings of Ayatollah Khomeini, which “… proved the viability of an Islamic government ….”\footnote{215} Admittedly, the Iranian Revolution did not provide a guarantee of what was to come, yet in conjunction with the Soviet-Afghan war and the Gulf war, the United States gained a reputation as the disruptive foreign invader, promising wealth and happiness but leaving a destroyed culture and few opportunities in its wake. As the Afghan war brought several of the region’s revolutionary organizations together, the Gulf war defined several grievances against the U.S., specifically the violation of the holy land by “infidels.”\footnote{216}

Specifically, with regard to Osama Bin Laden’s roots in the terrorism, his ideological conversion came from the ideologies of Sayyid Qutb, brother of Dr. Muhammad Qutb, one of Bin Laden’s professors at Jeddah University.\footnote{217} In his experiences in the United States Sayyid Qutb developed a distinct disdain for what he saw as western decadence and immorality, which to his displeasure, he found appearing “When he returned to Egypt in 1951 ….”\footnote{218} This radical influence, combined with elements of the Wahhabist factions in Saudi Arabia helped to create the
figure the world now knows as Osama bin Laden.\textsuperscript{219} Thus, by the early 90s, U.S. policies and cultural conflicts set the groundwork for an inter-continental clash.

*Islamic vs. Islamist: An Indictment of a Culture?*

However, while the origins of modern terror are unquestionably connected to elements of religion and ideology, to contend that the conflict is between the western liberal culture and Islam as a religion fails to account for the factionalization of Islam. Khaled Abou El Fadl notes in his discussion of Islam’s various components and competing factions that the emergence of Al Qaeda is more than a simple conflict between the East and West, but that,

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\text{… organizations such as the Jihad, al-Qaeda, Hizb al-Tahrir and Jama’at al-Muslimin … have anchored themselves in a theology that can be described as puritan, supremacist and thoroughly opportunistic. This theology is the byproduct of the emergence and eventual dominance of Wahhabism, Salafism and apologetic discourses in modern Islam.}\textsuperscript{220}
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The differentiation between Islamic and Islamist becomes a crucial factor in separating the radicalized groups responsible for international terrorist acts from those members of the Islamic faith. Specifically, Islamic refers to the legitimate religion of Islam as opposed to Islamist, which identifies those radicals who employ the religion for malicious ends.\textsuperscript{221} Therefore, one must consider the origins of the split that created the Islamist movement in order to truly comprehend the motivations of this particular aspect of modern terrorism.

Traditionally, Islamic law maintained strict policies regarding acts of violence, creating a moral jurist system designed to interpret and apply the teachings of the Qur’an to Islamic society. The jurists were adamant in regard to violence and “… insisted that there are legal restrictions

\textsuperscript{219} Burleigh, 462.
upon the conduct of war.”\textsuperscript{222} They prohibited essentially all non-combatant violence and property damage that did not directly affect militant forces.\textsuperscript{223} In fact, the jurists established that several radical factions of Islam that relied on terrorist acts to propagate their ideologies were “… muharibs (literally, those who fight society) [and] … someone who attacks defenseless victims by stealth, and spreads terror in society.”\textsuperscript{224} Thus, there is a readily apparent distinction between legitimate Islam and its radical, illegitimate, alternatives even dating back to the 11\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{225} Unfortunately, the jurist tradition waned, eventually falling out of favor as the Islamic nations faced a substantially different international environment following the colonial period, leaving a vacuum of guidance for the faith. As the various Islamic nations adapted to western ideals of governance, they sealed the jurists’ fates, centralizing and codifying the laws rather than relying on an evaluative governing body.\textsuperscript{226} With the jurists gone, there was now room for radical sectors of Islam to develop, culminating in the creation of Wahhabism by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab in an attempt to eliminate the “… corruptions that he believed had crept into the religion.”\textsuperscript{227} This philosophy would eventually grow to an international movement engaged in terrorist acts throughout the Middle East, maintaining itself until the present, albeit in a modified form.

\textit{The Modern Context of “Religious” Terror}

From a popular, modern perspective, until the terrorist attacks on September 11\textsuperscript{th}, religious terror existed as a historical reality, suitable for comparative study, but largely inapplicable to modern conditions. For the general public during the 90s, terrorism seemed to

\textsuperscript{222} El Fadl, 30.
\textsuperscript{223} El Fadl, 30.
\textsuperscript{224} El Fadl, 31.
\textsuperscript{225} El Fadl, 29.
\textsuperscript{226} El Fadl, 31.
\textsuperscript{227} El Fadl, 32.
disappear, as the number of attacks declined, exaggerating the post-cold war triumphalism expressed by many Americans with regard to U.S. foreign policy and national security.\textsuperscript{228} However, while attacks were down, the incidents of religious terror began to rise. Cronin notes, … [a]ccording to the RAND-St. Andrews University Chronology of International Terrorism, in 1968 none of the identified international terrorist organizations could be classified as “religious”; in 1980, in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, there were 2 (out of 64), and that number had expanded to 25 (out of 58) by 1995.\textsuperscript{229} Increases in lethality and American targets accompanied the above trend, clearly indicating a change in the nature of terrorism leading up to September 11\textsuperscript{th}, both in terms of radical religious based acts as well as a shift from small scale to mass casualty attacks.\textsuperscript{230}

Despite these changes, one must question the relevance of religion to terrorism if in fact the “religious” aspects of terror are no more than a radical deviation from legitimate Islam. To this end, one may draw on the historical examples provided in chapters one through three, beginning with the case of the Assassins. As a numerically disadvantaged organization, the Assassins needed tactics that could level the playing field between them and their adversaries, allowing for their territorial expansion. To achieve this leveling factor, they employed the concept of suicide terror, creating a unique motivation for the assassin in that he had literally nothing to fear given the certainty of his own death.\textsuperscript{231} They also employed shared religious beliefs to bind the organization together. Yet, perhaps the most significant aspect of religion within the Assassins is its use in arousing popular support. Beyond the organizational advantages to a religiously based organization, the Assassins recognized that if they could paint

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{228} Cronin, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{229} Cronin, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{230} Cronin, 43-44.
\item \textsuperscript{231} Christoph Reuter, My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 25.
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their struggle as a battle of good versus evil in terms that would resonate with the local residents, the strength of the Ismailis would increase infinitely. The residents would therefore become operatives in the Ismailis cause, not only preventing a popular uprising against the Assassins, but potentially providing a source of disruption for the targeted ruling government.\textsuperscript{232} One finds the same pattern of dependence on popular support in the Anarchist movement of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The anarchists presumed that the general public would rise up in support of their cause, recognizing the subtle, intellectual oppression levied upon them by the privileged governing class. However, in this instance, the reverse occurred, as the public became disillusioned by what they considered senseless violence against non-combatant, innocent parties. The failure was not operational, but strategic, in that without the ideological comprehension and support of the masses, the violence committed by the Anarchists lacked any substantive political meaning, rendering the organization a violent, destructive force in the eyes of the very public they stood to “liberate.”\textsuperscript{233} Thus, given this contrast in success, one cannot ignore the role of popular support in the success of a terrorist campaign, providing an explanation for the modern link between religious fundamentalism and terror. The confusion of the general public over the difference between the religious teachings of Islam and those of the Islamist movement epitomizes the goal of the modern terrorist organization: creating a public so thoroughly integrated that the enemy cannot differentiate between a terrorist and a non-combatant. Yet, even beyond the inability to differentiate the ideals of the public from those of the terrorist organization, this integration further demonstrates the effectiveness of Islamist propaganda, succeeding in creating sympathetic support within ideologically opposed groups. By playing on the social realities of the impoverished regions of the Middle East, terrorist cells

\textsuperscript{232} Please see chapter one for a detailed discussion of the Assassins.
\textsuperscript{233} Please see chapter two for a detailed discussion of the Anarchist movement.
build support while spreading and converting otherwise peaceful adherents to Islam to the radical Wahhabi cause. Most notably, in the case of Al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden took a humanitarian approach to winning public support, creating “… an alternative welfare state …” in an effort to facilitate a positive reputation for Al Qaeda and lend credence to his claims of an uncaring, immoral West. The Taliban even went so far as “… paying extremely poor peasants US$300 to join them,” and to drum up popular support.

Thus, while the religion of Islam is quite clearly distinct from the Islamist movement, to assert that the two do not interact ignores a key tactic within the modern terrorist’s arsenal. The use of the general public and its support is essential to the success of the modern terrorist organization, not only insuring a friendly domestic environment, but also acting as a potential membership pool. The common heritage of both groups facilitates an easy transition between the two, as Al-Qaeda and other analogous organizations provide an attractive solution for those individuals facing poverty, hunger, or a general disaffection with modern capitalist culture. On an empirical level, the concept of a shared historic identity is in many cases enough to sway otherwise untainted individuals to the terrorist cause. In addition to this mobilization aspect, the use of religion in the modern terrorist campaign reflects elements of 11th century terror and the Assassins, serving as a cohesive force that defines and maintains a terrorist organization. Through this common ideology, the terrorist network can operate independently of a centrally controlled organization, creating an organization that defies conventional tactical war while maintaining popular support despite its terrorist activities.

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234 Burleigh, 463.
235 Burleigh, 466.
236 Burleigh, 456.
237 Burleigh, 456.
Unfortunately, however, the notion of religious terrorism is not new, nor is it wholly applicable to the modern situation, as the propagation of Islam can hardly be considered a modern primary objective. Therefore, to assert that religion alone defines the modern era of terrorism as a revolution, as a new terrorism, makes assumptions that are historically unsustainable. This is not to say that modern terrorism is not unique, but that it cannot solely depend on a single factor to differentiate its tactics from the numerous historical analogs.

Globalization and its Influence on Modern Terror

Without question, the modern terrorist movement has an international flavor, impacting not only the Middle East, the British Isles, or the former Soviet nations, but engaging the world in the struggle against radical extremism due to the strong forces of interconnection present in modern international society. Given such a reality, it is no surprise that an attack on the United States has a trickle down effect upon the rest of the nations of the world; yet, in regard to the development of modern terror, globalization adds several dynamics, in addition to this interconnection, that serve to differentiate modern terror from its historic counterparts.

One must recognize that the role of globalization is two-fold, representing both the expanded focus of terrorist movements as well as its role as a facilitator for conflict through international interaction. As Cronin notes in her evaluation of globalization and international terror, “[t]he current wave of international terrorism, characterized by unpredictable and unprecedented threats from non-state actors, not only is a reaction to globalization but is facilitated by it ….”238 Therefore, in addition to evaluating the origins of globalization and its conflicted results, one must differentiate between the role of globalization in creating conflict as opposed to streamlining the terrorist process.

238 Cronin, 30.
A Brief History of Globalization

The origins of globalization as they relate to what is considered modern international culture stem back to the early industrial period, as Britain began to increase its dominance as an international trading power. Through the use of the British Navy to suppress the opportunists (pirates) who saw financial opportunity in this new international interaction, the British prospered, profiting off of local cultures through the exploitation of regional work and produce. However, World War II serves as the initiation of true globalization as it created the international forces requisite to a truly multinational globalization movement. As the allied powers vied for control of Germany and Eastern Europe, the two competing factions faced a unique conflict, largely based on ideology, but expressed in terms of economic, social, and military superiority. The Cold War defined nearly 50 years of international history, creating a power paradigm based in an economic, and largely symbolic struggle for dominance. However, a direct competition, regardless of its size cannot constitute “globalization” in the current sense. Rather, the policies of ideological containment advanced a policy of ideological indoctrination on both sides, resulting in the support of relatively unimportant nations to the conflict in an effort to substantiate the claim of ideological supremacy. Practically, such a policy created a series of welfare states, as the two superpowers contributed funds to these nations in an effort to “reinforce[e] the ideological leanings of the recipients or to wean them away from the other side. Both models ended up by creating stresses on the people as well as the environment.” Thus, there was only a limited material expansion of internationalization and globalization during the

240 Lal, 38.
242 Saighal, 142.
Cold War period; yet, it created the international circumstances requisite for U.S. dominance following the collapse of the Soviet Union. By ensuring the dependence of the marginalized, third world nations, the two superpowers created a pre-established market for both western products as well as the West’s need for cheap domestic labor and local goods.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, these “preparations” provided significant economic benefits to the West, as conflict that had formerly defined the foreign polices of most, if not all, of the great nations, suddenly disappeared, allowing for an increasingly international economic and political focus. The U.S. and its allies were free to act as they saw fit, unfettered by the threat of instant nuclear war. Thus, the interactions of globalization and terrorism are comparatively recent phenomena, made possible by the ideological struggle that resulted in the liberal west, as well as the eventual fall of the Soviet Union and the resultant power vacuum.

Globalization as a Source of Conflict

From these historical origins, one might easily discern the role of globalization in international discontent, but frequently the focus of international terror deviates to globalization as a tactic rather than an origin of the conflict itself. While the role of globalization in exacerbating global inequality is obvious, its influence in creating violent discontent among terrorist cells requires a nuanced approach. This is more than a conflict between the haves and the have-nots. It is also a movement based on a fear of cultural pollution, of such complete western dominance of a particular nation’s culture that their traditional ideals and values not only fade in significance, but are wholly supplanted by a modern, western ideal of society. For

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243 Saighal, 146.
244 Saighal, 146.
245 In this case, terrorism does not refer to piracy or any initial small-scale conflicts with regard to globalizations early phase. Instead, terrorism is used in its modern context.
example, Roger Scruton uses architecture to convey the fear present in much of the Middle East over western cultural pervasion. He notes,

But we should remember Mohammed Atta’s nostalgia for the old town of Aleppo and reflect on what has happened to the face of the Middle East under the impact of Western architectural norms, which have a symbolic significance at least equal to that of Western dress and Western manners. Architectural modernism was introduced with fanfares of globalist propaganda by the Bauhaus and by Le Corbusier, who envisaged their new style of architecture as both the symbol and the instrument of a radical break with the past. … It was “the international style” …

Scruton explains that from this shift in architectural style, those Middle Eastern nations felt as if they had lost a portion of their culture and lost part of what allowed the people to identify with their nation. He argues that while seemingly minor, this lack of personal identification ultimately led to the redefinition of personal loyalty from one’s nation, to their faith, or the first step toward the modern, globalized terror movement. One must be careful with this argument, however, as it comes dangerously close to indicting an entire culture for the actions of a tiny fraction of its populace. Nonetheless, Scruton makes an excellent point and provides solid evidence for the practical condemnation of terror by many Muslims while simultaneously supporting many of the views espoused by said terrorist organizations. The facilitation of cultural interaction provides one explanation for the ultimate emergence of globalized terror, “… engendered by the need to assert identity or meaning against forces of homogeneity ….”

247 Scruton, 130-131.
248 Evidence of such views both supporting the notion of an oppressive western society and the illegitimacy of Osama bin Laden and other terrorists can be found in the following interview of Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah: Shaykh Muhammad, Husayn Fadlallah, and Joseph Massad, “11 September, Terrorism, Islam, and the Intifada,” Journal of Palestine Studies 31, no. 2 (2002): 79-80.
249 Cronin, 52.
Fear of cultural destruction offers one aspect of the globalized terrorist motivations; yet, there is also a practical, material aspect to their motives, specifically the failure of globalization and western culture to produce meaningful economic change within the Middle Eastern region, particularly in light of the disproportionate wealth of the United States. The problem is unique in the sense that neither the West nor the east has to the tools to solve the problem. On one hand, the West cannot effectively solve the problems of all the Middle Eastern countries, but at the same time, there are few if any means by which nations can avoid the effects of globalization. They are, thus, inevitably drawn into its set of global realities. This in turn leads to discontent among the populace and eventually their sympathy toward organizations such as al-Qaeda or the Taliban who provide many of the services the West cannot. These are deeply discontented individuals “… who would support them [terrorists] because they feel powerless and left behind in a globalizing world.”

Globalization as an Enabler

Closely linked to this catch-22 of popular discontent, globalization also facilitates terrorist violence, providing a set of preconditions unique to the modern era that allow terrorist organizations to operate internationally with little difficulty. As Saighal suggests, globalization creates a unique American dominance of international commerce and society. Therefore, 9/11 represents the logical choice for a terrorist attack, “… the epicenter of the

250 Saighal, 141.
251 Saighal, 140.
252 Saighal, 149.
253 Cronin, 38.
254 Note that this is not implying that globalization only provided said preconditions during the post-9/11 period. Rather these conditions have been present since the mid-1960s. However, as will be shown, the post-9/11 period represents the first time these conditions have acted in conjunction with religious extremism, specifically the Wahhabism of al-Qaeda and other similar terrorist organizations.
255 Saighal, 141
The process of cultural pervasion that defines globalization as a source of conflict serves as one of the defining tools for the terrorist organization, providing a public predisposed to the terrorist ideology, even if morally opposed to his tactics. Like the Assassins, who depended upon popular support for the success of their operations, the modern terrorist benefits immensely from the pervasive western culture. Furthermore, this notion of popular uprising returns to the role of globalization in de-nationalizing the citizen, emphasizing not specifically one’s national interest, but the interests of the “eastern other” as a whole, sharply contrasting western values and certainly, globalization.

From an operational perspective, globalization maintains “neutrality” serving as an effective weapon for both the West and the East; however, the benefits arguably favor the east as globalization only further cements the role of non-traditional warfare against nations uniquely vulnerable to such engagement. Terrorists can now expand their initiatives effortlessly across nations and continents, effectively conducting terrorist campaigns remotely through the use of the internet, modern communication networks, and air travel. This is not to suggest that technology is the sole advantage of globalization, but merely one aspect made relevant by this internationalization of culture. As Cronin notes, “As this example illustrates, [referencing the hawala system of banking] globalization does not necessarily require the use of high technology: It often takes the form of traditional practices used in innovative ways across increasingly permeable physical and commercial borders.” Cronin is very careful in this regard, highlighting instead the fact that on a basic level the notion of interconnected societies is truly

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256 Saighal, 148.
257 Frank P. Harvey, Smoke and Mirrors: Globalized Terrorism and the Illusion of Multilateral Security (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2004), 15.
258 Harvey, 15.
259 Cronin, 48.
260 Cronin, 50.
the most useful aspect of globalization to the terrorist cause. While the Assassins benefited from popular support, their sphere of influence was limited to a regional focus. Arguably, technology resolves most of this problem, but beyond the initial leap with the introduction of motorized transport, globalization created a new type of terrorist, enabling goals beyond a rebellion against one’s state or the oppression of a regional power. Instead, for the first time, terrorists could engage in broad, ideological conflicts, unconstrained by locality. As Scruton put it, “… the techniques and infrastructure on which al-Qa’eda depends are the gifts of the new global institutions.”

Yet, similar to religious terrorism, globalization and its effect on terrorism is not new. It does not represent a paradigm shift in the way the modern terrorist operates with respect to either pre-9/11 terror nor 20th century terror.

Defining Modern Terror: The Union of Religion and Globalization

Thus, to accurately define and explain “modern terror” one must recognize the interrelationship of religion and globalization and the significance of this interaction in redefining the role of the terrorist organization. To contend that a specific trait or characteristic sums up what feels like a new era of terrorist activity ascribes too much weight to the phrase “new” terror. The concepts present are not new as historical precedents exist for many, if not all of the features exhibited in the past several years of terrorist activity. Rather, the conditions of modern society differentiate the new wave from their historical analogs, facilitating the union of several character traits that in combination create the perception of an entirely new terrorist movement. Thus, an attempt to break down the events of September 11th or the bombing of the Khobar Towers into their component tactics and ideologies only leads to frustration, as the component parts of these attacks reflect historical, rather than revolutionary movements.

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261 Scruton, 128
Instead, the evaluation of modern terror is not a search for revolutionary tactics, as such a method only provides a symptomatic solution, but a re-evaluation of modern society. How has the modern world evolved since the time of the Assassins and how does this evolution either facilitate the propagation of radical ideologies or conflicts among individuals?

Unlike the comparatively isolated Assassins or the ideologically unpopular anarchists, the modern Islamist terrorist organization possesses both the global reach and interest of the mid-century terrorist combined with the ideological solidarity of the Assassins. The international conditions, not the terrorists themselves, dictate this new wave of terrorist violence, evidenced by the fact that several of the organizations active today trace their roots back to the early 1980s. While the tactics may change, the general essence of a terrorist organization is merely a conglomeration of the past, organized in accordance with the constraints of modern society.
In Brief

Given the vast history of terrorism and its ever-changing nature, one must question the value of redefining the past in terms of the present. Is the study of terrorism itself truly relevant in establishing any kind of conclusion with regard to modern international politics? From an historical perspective, the precursor to the modern terrorist certainly offers insight as to the strategic and ideological preferences of today’s alternative warriors, making such a perspective an invaluable resource. The Assassins, Anarchists, and radical Palestinian organizations all offer telling examples that predate the modern terrorist strategy. However, with respect to the stimuli of modern terror, one must look beyond the past, avoiding the temptation to treat terrorism as if the concept itself defines the problems faced today. Rather, the creation of terrorism is a function of the modern international environment, the interaction of widely varying cultures and ideologies, all with unequal amounts of diplomatic and economic power. In essence, the modern condition of terrorism is an extrapolated version of the Assassins’ regional conflict. While the radical Islamist conception of the world provides a foundation for conflict, its combination with the increasingly globalized modern society amplifies the effects of inter-societal strife.

By re-evaluating the true history of terror, one actually finds that while there are parallels between the past and present, the true significance is not tactical, but temporal. Therefore, the modalities through which terrorism expresses itself in the 21st century demand a new alternative approach to the evaluation of terrorist conflict. Instead of viewing terrorist conflict in material, strategic terms, one must recognize the significance of the environmental factors that enable terrorist violence: An evaluation of the modern threat environment from an historical perspective.
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