

# THE NEW WAR

THE SUICIDAL COLLISIONS OF HIJACKED COMMERCIAL AIRLINERS INTO the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, entailed the most destructive terrorist attack in world history. Before the deaths of over 3,000 people in those attacks, the historically greatest single terrorist attack claimed the lives of about 380 people. The 2001 disaster took place at a time when experts had been defining a new form of terrorism focused on millennial visions of apocalypse and mass casualties. The catastrophic attacks seemed to confirm the previously unheeded fears of terrorism experts—that a qualitatively different form of terrorism was emerging.

The State Department's Patterns of Global Terrorism report revealed that the number of terrorist attacks has scaled back, even while the numbers of casualties have increased.<sup>1</sup> The late 1980s were a high point for terrorist attacks, with the number of attacks exceeding 600 in the years 1985–1988. With the exception of 1991, the number of terrorist attacks since 1988 has decreased to below 450 every year, reaching their nadir in the years 1996–1998, when the number of attacks decreased to about 300. The number of attacks has increased slightly since 1998, when there were 274, but the numbers have not reached those realized in any of the years of the 1980s. This report is not a linear progression from large numbers to small numbers of attacks, but the trend revealed is one of a decreasing number of attacks.

Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda network of international terrorists are the prime examples of the new terrorism, but Islamic radicalism is not the only form of apocalyptic, catastrophic terrorism. Aum Shinrikyo, the Japanese religious cult, executed its first major terrorist attack using chemical weapons on a Tokyo subway in 1995. The bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma revealed similar extremism by American right-wing militants. Other plots by Christian identity terrorists have shown similar mass casualty proclivities.

Beginning in 1995, Nadine Gurr and Benjamin Cole labeled nuclear-biological-chemical (NBC) terrorism as the “third wave of vulnerability” experienced by the United States. (The first two waves were the Soviet test of the atomic bomb in 1949 and the escalating nuclear arms race that followed.)<sup>2</sup> David Rapoport made a similar assessment that religiously motivated modern terrorism is the “fourth wave” in the evolution of terrorism, having been preceded by terrorism that focused on the breakup of empires, decolonialization, and anti-Westernism.<sup>3</sup>

The National Commission on Terrorism found that fanaticism, rather than political interests, is more often the motivation and that terrorists are more than ever unrestrained in their methods.<sup>4</sup> Other scholarly sources have reached similar conclusions. Terrorism is increasingly based on religious fanaticism.<sup>5</sup> Warnings about dangers of nontraditional terrorism have been raised frequently in pre-2001 literature.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Ashton Carter, John Deutch, and Philip Zelikow declared in 1998 that the new threat of catastrophic terrorism had emerged.<sup>7</sup> Past concerns about alienating people from supporting the cause are no longer important to many terrorist organizations. Rather than focusing on conventional goals of political or religious movements, today’s terrorists seek destruction and chaos as ends in themselves. Yossef Bodansky’s *Bin Laden* references *The Quranic Concept of War*:

Terror struck into the hearts of the enemies is not only a means, it is in *the* end in itself. Once a condition of terror into the opponent’s heart is obtained, hardly anything is left to be achieved. It is the point where the means and the ends meet and merge. Terror is not a means of imposing decision upon the enemy; it is the decision we wish to impose upon him.<sup>8</sup>

Many terrorists are ultimately more apocalyptic in their perspective and methods. The National Commission on Terrorism quoted R. James Woolsey: “Today’s terrorists don’t want a seat at the table, they want to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it.”<sup>9</sup>

For many violent and radical organizations, terror has evolved from being a means to an end to becoming the end in itself. The argument has been posited that the evolution of terrorism represents continuity rather than change, that mass casualty bombings have long been characteristic of terrorist methods, and that radical extremism has always dominated terrorist motivations.<sup>10</sup> Laqueur’s most recent book warned against trying to categorize or define terrorism at all because there are “many terrorisms,” and he emphasizes the particularities of various terrorist movements and approaches.<sup>11</sup> (Laqueur, however, has recognized some evolving strains of

terrorism, especially the Islamist variant.) Hoffman discussed the definition of terrorism at length in his 1998 book, and his final definition includes “political change” as the desired end-state of terrorist activity.<sup>12</sup> This would be more consistent with traditional means-end constructions of terrorism. Furthermore, Falkenrayth pointed out that mass casualty terrorism is still an aberrant occurrence.<sup>13</sup> A recent survey of terrorism suggests historical and intellectual links between the fascism of fanatical Islamist terrorism today and the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century, further emphasizing continuity rather than change.<sup>14</sup> Most recent scholarship, however, has taken the perspective that contemporary terrorism represents a significant departure from the past. Various factors have led to the development of this new type of terrorism. Paul Wilkinson pondered the increase in indiscriminateness among terrorists, and he posited several possible reasons accounting for this upsurge.<sup>15</sup> First, the saturation of the media with images of terrorist atrocity has raised the bar on the level of destruction that will attract headline attention. Second, terrorists have realized that civilian soft targets involve lower risk to themselves. Finally, there has been a shift from the politically minded terrorist to the vengeful and hard-line fanatic.

This chapter will explore this issue in further depth. While Wilkinson’s factors accurately describe developments in terrorist strategy and tactics, there are more fundamental forces at work. The world has undergone a variety of changes on several levels. While it is impossible to link all social changes to terrorism today, it is possible to track several distinct factors that characterize a form of terrorism that is unprecedented in the level of threat posed to the rest of the world. This chapter will explore these factors from a cultural, political, and technological perspective and American strategic response to these developments.

### CULTURAL FACTORS

Islamic radicalism is the most notorious form of the new culture of terrorism, but it is only part of a larger cultural trend leading to terrorist activity. Numerous cults, whose emergence in many cases has been synchronized with the turn of the new millennium, have also posed an increasing threat. Finally, extremists within the American religious right have been active with escalating and destructive objectives, although law enforcement presence has restrained the latter group.

It is important to distinguish religious terrorists from those terrorists with religious components but whose primary goals are political. Religiously motivated terrorist groups grew six-fold from 1980 to 1992 and

continued to increase in the 1990s. Hoffman asserted that “the religious imperative for terrorism is the most important characteristic of terrorist activity today.”<sup>16</sup> This may not be as much an entirely new phenomenon as a cyclic return to earlier motivations for terror. Until the emergence of political motives such as nationalism, anarchism, and Marxism, “religion provided the only acceptable justifications for terror.”<sup>17</sup> However, terrorism in modern times has not, until recent years, been so dominated by religious overtones. At the time when modern international terrorism first appeared, of the eleven identifiable terrorist groups, none could be classified as religious.<sup>18</sup>

Today’s terrorists increasingly look at their acts of death and destruction as sacramental or transcendental on a spiritual or eschatological level. The pragmatic reservations of secular terrorists do not hold back religious terrorists.<sup>19</sup> Secular terrorists may view indiscriminate violence as immoral. However, not only moral justification but righteous and necessary advancement of the religious terrorists’ cause are the perspective of many terrorists today. In addition, the goals of secular terrorists are much more attuned to public opinion, so senseless violence is not palatable to them since it would be counterproductive to their cause. In fact, Hoffman observed that the constituency itself differs between religious and secular terrorists. Secular terrorists seek to defend or promote some disenfranchised population and to appeal to sympathizers or prospective sympathizers. Religious terrorists are often their own constituency, having no external audience for acts of destruction.<sup>20</sup>

Aum Shinrikyo has been included in typologies of terrorism that include radical Islamists as part of a group of religiously motivated organizations that attack symbols of the modern state.<sup>21</sup> In many ways, the dynamics of cultist followings make groups such as Aum Shinrikyo (also known as Aleph) more dangerous than religious terrorists rooted in conventional and broadly based religious traditions or denominations. There is no constituency of more moderate adherents to share common beliefs with the radical group while at the same time posing a restraining influence. For the fundamentalist Islamic or Christian radical, authoritative figures from either of those religions can condemn violence and de-legitimize the terrorist, at least in the eyes of the average person of faith.

Another feature of religious cults that makes them incredibly dangerous is their personality-driven nature. Cultist devotion to one leader leaves followers less able to make their own moral decisions or consult other sources of reasoning. If that leader is emotionally or mentally unstable, the ramifications can be catastrophic. More dangerous religious terrorist groups from more traditional faiths may often share this feature

of the cult: a charismatic leader who exerts a powerful influence over the members of the group.

According to many analysts, Aum Shinrikyo demonstrated its comparatively more threatening potential in its use of sarin in the attack in the Tokyo subway. As D. W. Brackett wrote, "a horrible bell had tolled in the Tokyo subway. . . . Terrorists do not follow rules of engagement in their operations but they do absorb the lessons to be learned from successful acts of violence."<sup>22</sup> If for no other reason than providing an example to others, Aum has gained notoriety as one of the more dangerous terrorist elements. Despite setbacks such as the incarceration of key leadership figures, Aum Shinrikyo continues to pose future threats. The ability of Aum Shinrikyo to recruit individuals with a high level of education and technical knowledge has also been a significant aspect of the threat posed by this cult.<sup>23</sup>

After the sarin gas attack, it became clear that Aum had been earlier engaged in NBC terrorism in Tokyo. In the summer of 1993, residents in the vicinity of Aum Shinrikyo's eight-story headquarters noticed a gelatinous, oily, dark fluid emanating from one of the building's cooling towers. The cult's leader, Shoko Asahara, was forced to shut down the rooftop device, and the incident was not given much thought despite local reports of illness. However, a few years later, the true nature of the device would be discovered during Asahara's arraignment for the subway attack. Aum Shinrikyo had been spewing anthrax into the atmosphere of Tokyo through their building's cooling tower.<sup>24</sup> Thus, it is clear now that the sarin gas attack in 1995 was not the only time this Japanese cult turned towards weapons of mass destruction.

In the past, cults were not viewed as national security threats; they were more dangerous for unwary individuals who might succumb to the cult's influence. Even the emergence of cultist mass suicides did not alter this perception. However, the recent appearance of cults willing and able to adopt destructive political goals has revised the more benign view of the cult phenomenon. Since cults are often fundamentally based on the violence of coercion, they can be accustomed to the mindset necessary to adopt terrorist methods. Although the cult more often practices a mental violence with psychological control and panoptic invasions of privacy, they do occasionally engage in physical abuse. The most dangerous cults are also fascinated by visions of the end of the world, which, like radicals from more mainstream religions, cultists often believe they are instrumental in bringing about. The nature of the cult's mythical figure can also be indicative of the level of threat. A vengeful deity is more threatening than a suffering savior. This sign is somewhat unpredictable,

however, because cults can switch their principal myths as circumstances change.<sup>25</sup> In summary, cults are particularly dangerous forms of religious terrorism because they can appear quickly without warning, have no rational or predictable goals, and become agitated due to the apprehension and hostility with which they are viewed by the society at large.

Whether from cultists or extremists of more established religions, violence can be particularly threatening in comparison with the political terrorists of earlier years. As Hoffman noted, “for the religious terrorist, violence is a divine duty . . . executed in direct response to some theological demand . . . and justified by scripture.”<sup>26</sup> Religion can be a legitimizing force that not only sanctions but compels large-scale violence on possibly open-ended categories of opponents.<sup>27</sup> Terrorist violence can be seen as a divinely inspired end in itself. One explanation that has been proffered to account for violent Islamic extremism views revenge as the principal goal of the terrorists.<sup>28</sup> This reasoning makes political change or conventional political objectives irrelevant, and it is consistent with observations that violence is itself the objective. Fundamentalist Islam “cannot conceive of either coexistence or political compromise. To the exponents of Holy Terror, Islam must either dominate or be dominated.”<sup>29</sup> A recent study has traced the Islamic theological doctrine to the Middle Ages and has noted recent philosophical developments that explain the preponderance of religious mass casualty terrorism coming from adherents of Islam.<sup>30</sup>

Remarkably, a recent analysis of Bin Laden’s fatwa, published in *Studies of Conflict and Terrorism*, found that the content of the fatwa was “neither revolutionary nor unique, as it encapsulates broad sentiments in the Muslim world, especially that of Islam’s being on the defensive against foreign secular forces and modernization.”<sup>31</sup> However, some of the content of the fatwa does fall directly within the paradigm of contemporary religious terrorism. Consider the following excerpts:

Praise be to God, who revealed the book, controls the clouds, defeats factionalism, and says in his book: “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them.” . . . On that basis, and in compliance with God’s order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims:

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.<sup>32</sup>

Simon and Benjamin noted that many al Qaeda attacks, including the major planning phase of the September 11 attacks, took place during favorable times for the Palestinians in the Middle East peace process and that no foreign policy changes by the U.S. government could possibly appease the bin Ladenist radical.<sup>33</sup>

While Islamic terrorists are the most notorious of today's violent radicals, others such as right-wing Christian extremists also exhibit many characteristics of the new terrorism. Juergensmeyer identified three elements that Islamists, radical Christians, and other religious terrorists share: they perceive their objective as a defense of basic identity and dignity, losing the struggle would be unthinkable, and the struggle is in deadlock and cannot be won in real time or in real terms.<sup>34</sup>

In the past, Christian right-wing terrorists conducted racially motivated or religiously motivated acts of violence discriminately against chosen victims, and confrontation of the state was limited to when the state interfered in the right-wing agenda of the terrorist groups.<sup>35</sup> Today, the groups are directly hostile to the government, which they believe is engaged in a widespread conspiracy threatening the existence of the white Christian way of life. A recent FBI strategic assessment of the potential for domestic terrorism in the United States focused on Christian Identity and other right wing movements associated with Christian fundamentalism.<sup>36</sup> The most extreme of these fanatics attribute a subhuman status to people of color that mitigates moral grounds to avoid harming those groups. In addition, they view themselves in a perpetual battle with the forces of evil (as manifested through nonwhite races and a powerful, sinister government) that must culminate in the apocalyptic crisis predicted by the Book of Revelations. The Christian terrorists' view that it is their duty to hasten the realization of this divine plan permits and even exhorts them to greater levels of violence. That violence is directed against existing social structures and governments, which are viewed to be hopelessly entangled with dark forces such as Jewry, enormous financial conglomerates, and international institutions trying to form an ominous "new world order."

While Christian violence in the United States has been discriminately focused for decades against racial minorities and "immoral" targets (such as abortion clinics or physicians), it recently has expanded into attempted bombings and poisoning municipal water supplies.<sup>37</sup> These indiscriminate attacks demonstrate a willingness to tolerate greater levels of collateral damage in efforts to generate mass levels of casualties. The bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was the pinnacle of this trend and although Timothy McVeigh accepted responsibility for

that attack, it is believed that other right-wing militia or Christian terrorists were involved.<sup>38</sup> Effective domestic law enforcement in the United States has largely prevented these groups from achieving widespread violence on the level of Oklahoma City, making that incident a tragic exception among a larger number of foiled plots.

While there is certainly no cooperation between foreign Islamist and domestic Christian radicals, there is a disquieting solidarity in their views. August Kreis of the paramilitary group, Posse Comitatus, responded to the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers with this disconcerting rant: "Hallelu-Yahweh! May the WAR be started! DEATH to His enemies, may the World Trade Center BURN TO THE GROUND!"<sup>39</sup> Jessica Stern's recent book compiling five years of interviews with international terrorists does not begin with an example from the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, nor with the streets of the Middle East.<sup>40</sup> Her introductory example is a former Christian terrorist in a Texas trailer park. While Islamic terrorism is the most salient threat to the United States, it is not the only danger posed by the new trend of a culture of violence and extremism.

A cluster of several cultural features among new international terrorist groups indicate the high level of threat. These aspects include a conception of righteous killing-as-healing, the necessity of total social destruction as part of a process of ultimate purification, a preoccupation with weapons of mass destruction, and a cult of personality where one guru dominates his followers who seek to become perfect clones.<sup>41</sup> These aspects taken together represent a significant departure from the culture of earlier terrorist groups and represent a serious threat to the industrialized world.

#### **POLITICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS**

A number of developments in the international scene have created conditions ripe for mass casualty terrorism. Gross inequalities in economic resources and standards of living between different parts of the world are a popular reason given for the ardency and viciousness of contemporary terrorists,<sup>42</sup> although governmental collapse in "failed states" as a breeding ground for terrorists presents a more convincing variation on this logic.<sup>43</sup> However, there is no "comprehensive explanation in print for how poverty causes terror" nor is there a "demonstrated correlation between the two."<sup>44</sup> The intrusion of Western values and institutions into the Islamic world through the process of free market globalization is an alternative explanation for terrorism, which is the weaker party's method

of choice to strike back.<sup>45</sup> The process of globalization, which involves the technological, political, economic, and cultural diminution of boundaries between countries across the world, has insinuated a self-interested, inexorable, corrupting market culture into traditional communities. Many within these communities see these forces as threatening their way of life. At the same time globalization has provided a motivation for terrorism, it has also facilitated methods for it.

One of the major consequences of globalization has been a deterioration of the power of the state.<sup>46</sup> The exponential expansion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regional alliances, and international organizations has solidified this trend. Although not a NGO like the Red Cross or *Médécins sans Frontières*, al Qaeda was a successful non-governmental movement that crossed international borders. The trend among terrorists to eschew direct connections with state sponsors has had several advantages for the enterprising extremist. Terrorist groups are more likely to maintain support from “amorphous constituencies,” so extreme methods are more acceptable because such methods can be used without fear of alienating political support.<sup>47</sup> Kushner described this development as a growth of “amateur” groups as direct state sponsorship has declined.<sup>48</sup> Lawrence Freedman pointed out that the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan was not so much a state sponsor of terrorism as it was a “terrorist-sponsored state.”<sup>49</sup>

However, terrorists do continue to enjoy benefits of indirect state sponsorship. Although the opportunity for state sponsorship has arguably diminished due to the Bush administration’s war on terror that has been prosecuted in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks, state sponsorship remains widespread. In fact, developments in the counterterrorist measures may propagate some dangerous trends of modern terrorism. As terrorists cannot rely on direct state sponsorship, they will become less accountable and harder to track. States must conceal their involvement by exercising less control and maintaining less comprehensive intelligence of radical terrorist organizations. Many states have been on American government lists of state sponsors for over ten years, including Cuba, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and Syria. More recently, Sudan and Afghanistan were designated as government sponsors of terrorism. Many state sponsors cooperate with one another to promote terrorist violence, making terrorist activity further disconnected from the foreign policy of any single state. Iran has funded training camps in the Sudan and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad has received support from both Iran and Syria.<sup>50</sup> Further exacerbating the problem is the method of funding, which often

has no measures for accountability. Iran's support for terrorist organizations can include no target selection and occasionally results, with the funds disappearing, in no terrorist attacks.<sup>51</sup> State sponsors tolerate this unpredictability because of the destructive payoff and the obfuscation of evidence connecting the state to the terrorist. Iran has self-consciously created a decentralized command structure because of these advantages.<sup>52</sup> A further advantage of maintaining "arm's length" from extremist operatives is for self-protection. The Sudanese government intelligence monitored Osama bin Laden while he lived in that country apparently to prevent his activities from eventually inflicting harm to even that extremist government.<sup>53</sup>

While American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has diluted the threat from those states, other sponsors have possibly been left off official lists for political reasons. (It has been frequently argued that inclusion of a state on the list of state sponsors of terrorism reflects its relationship with the United States.)<sup>54</sup> Pakistani intelligence has reportedly been involved in sponsoring violent terrorists both in Afghanistan and the contentious Kashmir. Additionally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been at the center of controversy over sponsorship and proliferation of radicalism and violence. Laurent Murawiec, an analyst at the Rand Corporation, attracted public attention by pointing out the dangers of Saudi support for radical Islamists and specifically Osama bin Laden in a briefing to the Defense Policy Board in 2002. While there is no official publication of the Rand Corporation documenting this analysis, Murawiec highlighted evidence of Saudi support for the Islamist agenda through Islamic educational venues and financial backing.

So while globalization has helped remove many of the restraints that state sponsorship once imposed, terrorists can still enjoy the funding and protection that sponsorship provides. Globalization also facilitates terrorism through targeting: "In today's globalizing world, terrorists can reach their targets more easily, their targets are exposed in more places, and news and ideas that inflame people to resort to terrorism spread more widely and rapidly than in the past."<sup>55</sup> The easing of border controls and the development of globe-circling infrastructures enable recruitment, fundraising, movement of materiel, and other logistical functions.

In addition to international political changes, there have been developments in organizational practice that have enhanced the lethality of terrorists. As corporations have evolved organizationally, so have terrorist organizations. Terrorist groups have evolved from hierarchical, vertical organizational structures, to more horizontal, less command-driven

groups. According to a Rand report, leadership is derived from a “set of principles [that] can set boundaries and provide guidelines for decisions and actions so that members do not have to resort to a hierarchy—‘they know what they have to do.’” The report described organizational designs that may “sometimes appear acephalous (headless), and at other times polycephalous (Hydra-headed).”<sup>56</sup> Paul Smith observed that the multicellular structure of al Qaeda gave the organization agility and cover and has been one of its key strengths.<sup>57</sup> This flexibility has allowed al Qaeda to establish bases using indigenous personnel all over the world. It has infiltrated Islamic NGOs in order to conceal operations.<sup>58</sup> Jessica Stern commented on al Qaeda’s ability to maintain operations in the face of an unprecedented onslaught: “The answer lies in the organization’s remarkably protean nature. Over its life span, al Qaeda has constantly evolved and shown a surprising willingness to adapt its mission. This capacity for change has consistently made the group more appealing to recruits, attracted surprising new allies, and—most worrisome from a Western perspective—made it harder to detect and destroy.”<sup>59</sup> This also makes the terrorist organization harder to stop because there is no single hub of information and guidance that plans and controls all activities.

### TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS

In addition to the cultural and religious motivations of terrorists and the political and organizational enabling factors, the ways in which technology has evolved provide unprecedented opportunities for terrorists. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the possibility of proliferation of nuclear weapons to nonstate users is the primary factor that has significantly increased the danger of nuclear terrorism.<sup>60</sup> However, non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction and information technology have also created opportunities for terrorism that are in many ways more threatening than radiological terrorism because these alternatives are more probable.

Some theorists have argued that weapons of mass destruction do not represent a weapon of choice for most terrorists, even in these changing times. “Most terrorists will continue to avoid weapons of mass destruction (WMD) for a variety of reasons,” preferring the “gun and the bomb.”<sup>61</sup> Jenkins agreed that most terrorist organizations are technologically conservative but he admitted that the self-imposed moral restraints that once governed terrorist action are fading away.<sup>62</sup> As the trends in the preceding sections reach fullness, increasing the level of mass casualty terrorism, terrorists may turn more to weapons that will better fit their objectives and moralities.

Laqueur's *New Terrorism* emphasized the availability of very powerful weapons of mass destruction as the major current danger facing the industrialized world.<sup>63</sup> Aside from the nuclear variety of WMD, biological and chemical weapons pose serious dangers. Biological weapons are limited in their destructive power because human contact is required to spread the effects, but as the 2003 Asian brush with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) demonstrated, the panic and uncertainty can take a large economic and political toll. This is not to mention the cost in human suffering for those exposed to the pathogen perhaps without knowing why or even whether they have been infected. Biological weapons can come in a variety of forms, to include viruses, bacteria, and rickettsia (bacteria that can live inside host cells like viruses).

Chemical toxins differ from biological weapons in that they are non-living pathogens and require direct infection and contact with victim. This negates the continual spread of the weapon but it entails more direct and possibly more damaging effects. Chemical agents appear in several types: choking agents that damage lung tissue, blood agents that cause vital organs to shut down, blister agents (also known as vesicants) that damage the skin, and the most lethal, nerve agents. The agent infects its victim by various means, including inhalation, skin effects, and digestive tract. Exacerbating the danger is the fact that many deadly chemicals, or their components, are commercially available.

The State Department's annual report on terrorism asserted that the events of September 11, 2001, confirmed the intent and capability of terrorist organizations to plan and execute mass casualty attacks. The report also stated that these unprecedented attacks may lead to an escalation of the scope of terrorism in terms of chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear methods.<sup>64</sup> The report further cited evidence discovered in military raids of Afghan terrorist facilities, the use of poison by Hamas in coating shrapnel of improvised explosives, and an unnamed group arrested in Italy with a compound capable of producing hydrogen cyanide and maps of the U.S. embassy. Activities of cults such as Aum and plans of American right-wing terrorists to poison municipal water facilities provide further evidence of the WMD threat.

Another key development is information technology. This technology provides an opportunity for targeting as industrialized societies place greater reliance on information infrastructures. Terrorists will likely avoid dismantling the Internet because they need the technology for their own communication and propaganda activities. As such, these terrorists may be more interested in "systemic disruption" rather than the total destruction of information networks.<sup>65</sup> While the consequences of a major disruption of American or global information infrastructures could be

financially or socially catastrophic, terrorists have not shown the inclination or capability to undertake massive strikes in this area. There have been limited attacks along these lines, but the major use of information technology has been as an aid for, rather than a target of, terrorist activity. The publicized use of the Internet and e-mail by al Qaeda to coordinate such strikes as the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks is an example of this sort of coordination. As Paul Pillar noted, "Information technology's biggest impact on terrorists has involved the everyday tasks of organizing and communicating, rather than their methods of attack."<sup>66</sup>

Technology has altered the ability of terrorists to conduct mass casualty attacks. Perhaps surprisingly, the greatest single terrorist attack (other than the attacks of September 11, 2001) claimed the lives of about 380 people. The yield of contemporary radiological, chemical, and biological weapons can realize the goals of today's terrorists as exemplified by the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, the Oklahoma City bombing, the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway, and similar yet failed attacks of the past decade. Technological developments and their availability as spread by the globalized market economy have unavoidably expanded the dangers of terrorism in the new century.

The practice of terrorism has undergone dramatic changes in recent years. The categorical fanaticism that is apparent in terrorist organizations across a spectrum of belief systems is a major part of this change. In the past, terrorists were more likely to be dominated by pragmatic considerations of political and social change, public opinion, and other such effects. Today, what was a minute rarity in the past, terrorists bent on death and destruction for its own sake, is commonplace. In addition, the statelessness of terrorists removes crucial restraints that once held the most extreme terrorists in check or prevented them from reaching the highest levels in their organizations. Terrorists can still enjoy the funding and shelter that only a national economy can mobilize, but they are on their own to a greater degree in greater numbers than in the past. Organizationally, terrorists are using non-hierarchical structures and systems that have emerged in recent years. Finally, unprecedented availability of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction technology provides the means for the realization of the cultural, political, and organizational trends towards apocalyptic, less restrained, more decentralized forms of terrorism.

Terrorism has quantitatively and qualitatively changed from previous years. Whether it is Gurr and Coleman's "third wave of vulnerability" or Rapoport's "fourth wave of terrorism," contemporary terrorism is a significant departure from the phenomenon even as recently as during the Cold War. The uncompromising nature of the zealous determination of

violent extremism coupled with the horrible and unparalleled consequences of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons have created what the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy called “the crossroads of radicalism and technology.”<sup>67</sup> The cataclysmic impact of September 11 both on the American strategic consciousness and the international security environment must not be underestimated. Those attacks, which resulted from a combination of cultural, political, and technological factors, were a revelation to the world of the emergence of the new terrorism.

### THE AMERICAN STRATEGIC RESPONSE

As noted in Chapter 1, the attacks of September 11, 2001, hold great significance for the strategic consciousness of the United States. National security theorists had remarked upon the changing nature and growing threat of terrorism for years before the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. The revelation of national vulnerability in the collapse of the twin towers was the result of one of very few attacks on the territory of the United States, but not the first such episode. The surprise bombing of Pearl Harbor was recalled by many, and Noam Chomsky, in his book *9-11*, pointed out that it was not since 1812 that the continental United States had been violated by foreign assault.<sup>68</sup> The best articulation of the American response and its rationale was made in the 2002 *National Security Strategy*. We will explore the key points of how the United States interpreted the threat and how it chose to respond. While this discussion takes its perspective from the point of the view of the Bush administration authors of the strategy, it is meant to be neither an apology nor a defense. The results of the approach have been mixed at best. While preventing any follow-on attacks on the American homeland (as of this writing in 2007), the strategy has embroiled the country in foreign wars without strong prospects for conclusive and successful ends, at the cost of much national treasure, blood, and prestige.

The *National Security Strategy* described the newly revealed threat in contrast to the Cold War Soviet menace. The Cold War was a balance of terror in which mutually assured destruction forced conflict to the periphery. The nuclear arsenals of the United States and the USSR implied the possibility of ultimate devastation of the civilized world. Peace activists who opposed deterrence during the Cold War now embrace this doctrine as the strategy of choice against rogue states (or, more euphemistically, “states of concern”). What was once seen as a strategy of reckless irresponsibility endangering the survival of humanity is now the only alternative that peace activism sees to avoid more belligerent direct confrontation in

the post–Cold War age. The *National Security Strategy* outlined several key differences between the Cold War and the current threat.<sup>69</sup>

The strategy's first point is the risk-averse nature of the status quo. The Soviet empire was stable because it had strong interests in maintaining the status quo. This status quo was a situation in which the USSR held part of a bipolar dominance over world affairs. The prospect of retaliation that restrained the Soviet threat is less likely to deter leaders of rogue states seeking to improve their marginalized status with bold action.

In addition, the prevailing view of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) during the Cold War was that they were to be used as the last resort. The *National Security Strategy* pointed out that the concept of asymmetric warfare has asserted the use of WMD by lesser powers as tools of intimidation and aggression. The strategy also warned of the possibility of WMD as instruments of blackmail by rogue states to counteract American deterrence or repulsion of aggression.

Finally, the statelessness of terrorist enemies provides an outlet for the capabilities of rogue states. Rogue states seeking to cause harm to the United States can sell chemical, biological, or nuclear arms to nonstate terrorist organizations. The *National Security Strategy* warned that the gravest danger lies in the fact that it is the states seeking weapons of mass destruction that are also known for their support of terrorist activity.

American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan provide a practical application of this new strategic mindset. One of the major criticisms of diplomatic efforts in the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq was the greater danger posed by the Kim Jong Il regime in North Korea. Critics asserted that North Korea, not Iraq, should be the object of the Bush administration's attention. Indeed, diplomatic challenges experienced by the U.S. administration can be partially attributed to the increasingly belligerent activity of North Korea during the Iraqi weapons inspections crisis. North Korea formally withdrew from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty on January 10, 2003, and continued with missile tests and further hostile diplomacy in the following months. These developments sparked criticism that North Korea was a far more dangerous threat than Iraq. With North Korean nuclear blackmail destabilizing the region—as the U.S. *National Security Strategy* had warned—the larger threat emanating from Pyongyang was clear.

The international community urged the United States to engage North Korea bilaterally on the missile issue and leave Iraq to the sluggish multilateral Security Council. In this way, the members of the international community were maximizing the chances for defeat. Confronting

North Korea while it was brandishing a nuclear capability would likely have led to concession or appeasement. It is best to avoid attacking where the enemy is strong, and the United States rightly refused to engage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) at this unfavorable moment.

At the same time, Iraq was weak, but time was in its favor. Given time, Hussein's Iraq would strengthen rather than weaken in the danger it posed to the United States. It could develop into an asymmetric threat equaling the Korean regime. The principle behind intervention to preempt this growth is similar to the theme of intervention in the nineties, in which humanitarian or peacekeeping intervention is less costly and more effective at earlier stages.

The first Gulf War started when Saddam Hussein invaded his neighbor Kuwait to annex it as part of a greater Iraq. The issue of previous American support of Iraq was not relevant in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The decision to repel Hussein was made for various reasons: to preserve international law, to defend a helpless victim, to stabilize oil prices, and perhaps most importantly, to prevent further aggression in the region against Saudi Arabia or other nations. The multiple levels of justification are similar to those of the second war with Iraq.

President George W. Bush and members of his administration included enforcement of UN resolutions, connections to al Qaeda, humanitarian abuses by the Hussein regime, and present capabilities in weapons of mass destruction (as well as future capability in nuclear weapons) as various justifications in the case for war. The concern about the presence of weapons of mass destruction has been the subject of particular controversy after the invasion in the failure to discover the expected weapons (although there is some evidence that Hussein himself was deluded by his scientific and military subordinates that he had WMD capabilities that did not actually exist).<sup>70</sup> It is interesting that possibly the major impetus to war in both cases was a concern for the future—in the case of Operation Desert Storm, it was preventing further Iraqi aggression in the region; in the case of Operation Iraqi Freedom, it was preempting sponsorship of terror and the proliferation of WMD.

The Gulf War ended in 1991 with an agreement for certain disarmament measures by Iraq. The continued violation of this agreement and repeated international calls for compliance caused many observers to question the efficacy of weapons inspections regimes and economic sanctions. However, the United States pursued multiple diplomatic options in order to compel Iraqi disarmament despite years of unsuccessful attempts to enforce the Iraqi peace agreement and subsequent UN resolutions.

Hawkish critics have argued that the failure to invade deeper into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein in 1991 was the cause of recent difficulties and ultimately the crisis. However, the decision to repel the invading Iraqis from Kuwait and leave the existing Iraqi regime in power is consistent with the principle to undertake minimum possible violence. The economic sanctions and weapons inspections that took place in the following years could similarly be interpreted as attempting to win the peace in Iraq without resorting to further direct military conflict.

The Bush administration decided to propose Resolution 1441, symbolizing the desire to build an international consensus to pressure Iraqi compliance with disarmament. Rather than take immediate unilateral military action, or with an ad hoc coalition of allies, the United States accepted the risk of cooperating with the entire international community and pursuing further diplomatic solutions. This risk comprised a desire for nonviolent resolution of the Iraqi crisis. After the farcical Iraqi declaration of armaments, it was clear that the Hussein regime would not comply with the resolution, which had put the burden of proof on Iraq. As a result, the inspection process evolved into a “scavenger hunt” led by Hans Blix to uncover Iraqi weapons. As this was taking place, the United States still hoped that a show of credible force on the Iraqi border would compel disarmament.

The actions leading up to the Iraqi invasion attempted to avoid fighting. While the war was one of choice in that there was no immediate threat to the United States or an ally, it was also pursued at an opportune time when the cost was lower than it would be in an indefinite future. It was pursued after a series of alternatives attempting to win without fighting had failed.

It is important to note that the failure to find a comprehensive WMD threat after the fall of the Iraqi regime has provided ample ammunition for critics, but there is still compelling evidence to justify intervention given the information available at the time. It seems intelligence at the time had made a good faith assessment of Iraqi capabilities, and this assessment was shared by military communities around the world. Even the Iraqi military itself believed in Iraq’s weapons capability and Hussein’s propensity to use it. Marine veteran-turned-author Nate Fick related his encounter with an Iraqi battalion commander whose soldiers clung to their gas masks. When Fick asked the officer if he feared a chemical attack from the American invaders, the Iraqi commander replied, “No. We think Saddam will use them against you and we will be caught in the middle.”<sup>71</sup> In 2006, a former top Iraqi general published an exposé similarly revealing that Iraq had possessed significant weapons.<sup>72</sup> While

the general's account may not be impartial, it adds to the evidence that there is more to the story despite the failure to uncover weapons after the invasion. At the time before the invasion, strategists used existing intelligence, Iraq's evasive weapons report, and the expulsion of UN inspectors in 1998 to point to a dangerous and hidden WMD capability.

It can be noted that, of historical military endeavors, Operation Iraqi Freedom's offensive phase was one of the most conscientious about preserving enemy noncombatants and avoiding destruction of the nation's resources. Technological capabilities contributed to this result because increasing precision in targeting allowed American firepower to be more effective and less indiscriminately destructive. Max Boot observed that the precision bombing, within meters of an intended target, allowed for lighter loads of munitions. This capability was capitalized on by U.S. forces, which minimized collateral damage by using the smallest possible explosives, even dropping bombs filled only with concrete. Although the Iraqis used schools, hospitals, and mosques to provide military forces with unlawful Geneva Convention shielding, the United States "took great care to spare civilians. . . . Even though U.S. Army doctrine favors nighttime operations, the 101st Airborne Division operated mainly during the daytime—because, as one of its brigade commanders put it, 'You can much more easily discern civilians during the daytime.'"<sup>73</sup>

The "shock and awe" campaign may not have been as spectacular as the news media audience had anticipated, but it did borrow from Sun Tzu's philosophy of reducing enemy morale to achieve victory without imposing physical damage. The authors of *Shock and Awe* point out that the doctrine is consistent with Sun Tzu's philosophy to disarm the opponent before the battle is joined.<sup>74</sup> The central example they use is based on a story from China in which Sun Tzu was summoned before the King of Wu, who wanted to test his theory of managing soldiers. The king proposed that Sun Tzu teach drill and ceremony to 180 young women in the palace. Sun Tzu organized them into two companies and at the head of each company placed one of the king's favorite concubines. He had them all take spears in their hands, and then he addressed the group: "I presume you know the difference between front and back, right hand and left hand? When I say 'Eyes front,' you must look straight ahead. When I say 'Left turn,' you must face towards your left hand. When I say 'Right turn,' you must face towards your right hand. When I say 'About turn,' you must face right round towards your back."

The girls indicated that they understood the instructions. Then he gave the order "right turn." But the girls only burst out laughing. Sun

Tzu said, "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then the general is to blame."

So he explained his instructions again and restarted the drilling. Again, the girls burst into fits of laughter after hearing the command. Sun Tzu announced, "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, the general is to blame. But if his orders *are* clear, and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the fault of their officers."

So saying, he ordered the leaders of the two companies to be beheaded. The King was watching the scene from the top of a raised pavilion. When he saw that his favorite concubines were about to be executed, he was alarmed and hurriedly sent down the following message: "We are now quite satisfied as to our general's ability to handle troops. It is our wish that these two concubines should not be beheaded."

Sun Tzu replied, "Having received His Majesty's commission to be the general of his forces, there are certain commands of His Majesty which, acting in that capacity, I am unable to accept." So he had the two leaders beheaded and installed two others as leaders. When this had been done, the drum was sounded for the drill, and the girls went through all the evolutions, turning to the right or to the left, marching ahead or wheeling back, kneeling or standing, with perfect accuracy and precision, not venturing to utter a sound. Then Sun Tzu sent a messenger to the King, saying, "Your soldiers, Sire, are now properly drilled and disciplined, and ready for your majesty's inspection. They can be put to any use that their sovereign may desire; bid them go through fire and water, and they will not disobey."

The story is primarily meant to portray effective discipline. One can also draw conclusions relating to Huntingtonian conceptions of civil-military relations, in which professional officers exercise control over tactical decisions once war has begun. In fact, some versions of the story end with the king's sullen refusal to view the women parade, and Sun Tzu chiding him for lacking the perspicacity and will to effectively lead the state in wartime. This part of the story is not retold in *Shock and Awe*, however. Harlan Ullman and his coauthors drew parallels between the story of the palace concubines and shocking the opponent into submission. While this might not be the original intention of this example, Ullman's point is valid in that the use of force to induce compliance is a relevant tactic in Sun Tzu's philosophy of warfare.

The intent of the shock and awe campaign was in part to demonstrate America's overwhelming military superiority in support of the psychological

operations campaign and the negotiations with senior Iraqi commanders to surrender their forces. Extensive psychological operations also were focused on reducing the length and destructiveness of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Iraqi military put up more resistance than some expected, but the massive surrenders that did take place were a major contributor to reducing the fighting. Max Boot noted:

Spurred by dramatic advances in information technology, the U.S. military has adopted a new style of warfare that eschews the bloody slogging matches of old. It seeks a quick victory with minimal casualties on both sides. Its hallmarks are speed, maneuver, flexibility, and surprise. It is heavily reliant upon precision firepower, special forces, and psychological operations. . . . This approach was put powerfully on display in the recent invasion of Iraq, and its implications for the future of American war fighting are profound.<sup>75</sup>

Keeping operations short in duration helped avoid the attrition of both friendly and enemy resources (from both moral and physical perspectives). The movement to Baghdad was unprecedented in its speed.

Operation Iraqi Freedom and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime highlighted the stunning success of American decisive offensive operations. However, the success in accomplishing the tactical objectives of the war also presents a stark contrast to the chaotic aftermath of the offensive campaign and the lack of planning for and execution of larger strategic and political objectives. The second Gulf War demonstrated the capability of the American armed forces in direct combat and their inattention and inability in the softer side of the spectrum of operations.

### IMPLICATIONS

The new terrorism that has emerged in the past few decades, coupled with the aggressive American response to this threat, has had tremendous ramifications for the relationship between the state and the military. The transition has been dramatic: from a period in which military force was not very relevant to a time in which it is central to the nation's political discourse. The state has thus come to rely on the armed forces as more than a method to promote social change or a battleground to advance advocacy of specific causes.

These changes have occurred for two reasons that have dominated the narrative of this chapter. First, contemporary terrorism poses a threat in a new way that has been able to uniquely arouse popular concern and

political vigilance. Several factors have contributed to the emergence of this new terrorism, but the consequences are the more important matter for the interaction of the American military and the state since September 11. This brings us to the second factor, the American strategic response. The response has been aggressive and energetic, but its effectiveness in direct operations has not been matched by the performance in the stability mission after the initial invasion.

This strategic response may have revealed the militarism observed by Andrew Bacevich, but if Bacevich is correct, militarism is a strain of American consciousness that goes decades back. He convincingly cites C. Wright Mill's classic *Power Elite* to make this point: "For the first time in the nation's history, men in authority are talking about an 'emergency' without a foreseeable end," where war is "the normal state and seemingly permanent condition of the United States," and "the only accepted 'plan' for peace is the loaded pistol."<sup>76</sup> This thought from the Cold War will eventually lead us to Chapter 7, where we will consider the garrison state hypothesis of Harold Lasswell, another great political scientist of that period, given today's Global War on Terror.