

COUNTER INSURGENCY

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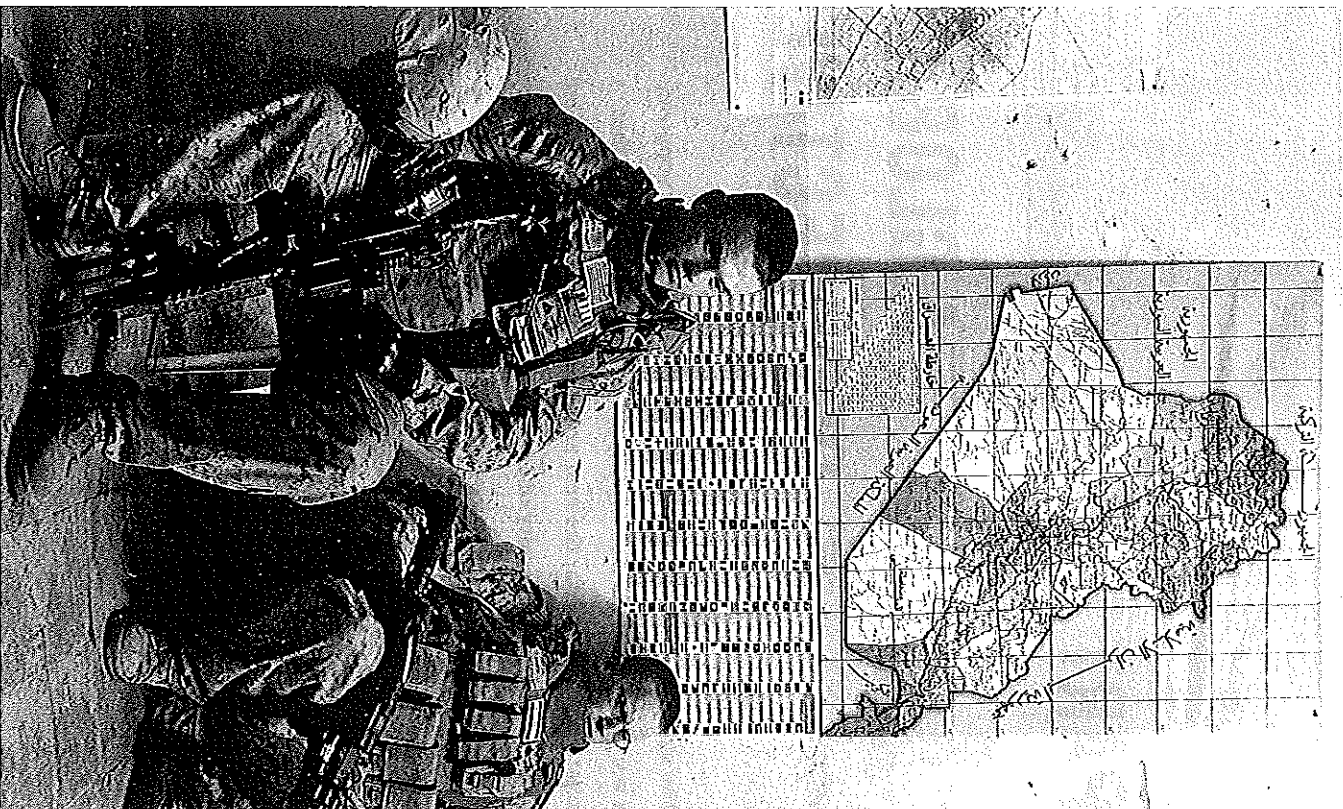
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For Dave Dillegge and Bill Nagle, founders and editors of *Small Wars Journal*. They gave the counterguerrilla underground a home, at a time when misguided leaders banned even the word "insurgency," though busily losing to one. Scholars, warriors, and agitators, Dave and Bill laid the foundation for battlefield success: our generation owes them a debt of gratitude.

Countering Global Insurgency 6



Since the United States declared a global “War on Terrorism” following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, some analysts have argued that terrorism is merely a tactic, thus a war on terrorism makes little sense. Francis Fukuyama’s comment that “the war on terror is a misnomer...terrorism is only a means to an end; in this regard, a war on terrorism makes no more sense than a war on submarines” is typical.¹ This view is irrelevant in a policy sense (the term “War on Terrorism” is a political, not an analytical, expression) but nonetheless accurate. Indeed, to paraphrase Clausewitz, to wage this war effectively, we must understand its true nature: neither mistaking it for nor trying to turn it into something it is not.² We must distinguish Al Qa’eda and the broader militant movements it symbolizes—entities that *use* terrorism—from the tactic of terrorism itself. In practice, as I will demonstrate, the “War on Terrorism” is a defensive war against a worldwide Islamist jihad, a diverse confederation of movements that uses terrorism as its principal—but not its sole—tactic.

This chapter argues that the present conflict is actually a campaign to counter a globalized Islamist insurgency.³ Therefore, counterinsurgency theory is more relevant to this war than is traditional counterterrorism. As this analysis shows, a counterinsurgency approach would generate a subtly, but substantially different range of actions in prosecuting the “War on Terrorism.” On this basis, the analysis argues for

a strategy of "disaggregation" that seeks to dismantle, or delink, the global jihad.* Just as the so-called containment strategy was central to the Cold War, likewise a disaggregation strategy would provide a unifying strategic conception for the current war—something that has been lacking to date.

THEESIS

My principal thesis is this:

- The "War on Terrorism" is actually a campaign to counter a global Islamist insurgency. So counterinsurgency, not counterterrorism, may provide the best approach to the conflict.
- However, classical counterinsurgency is designed to defeat insurgency in one country. Hence, traditional counterinsurgency theory has limitations in this context. Therefore, we need a new paradigm, capable of addressing globalized insurgency.
- Classical counterinsurgency uses systems analysis, but traditional reductionist systems analysis cannot handle the complexity of insurgency. However, the emerging science of complexity provides new tools for systems assessment—hence, complex systems analysis may provide new mental models for globalized counterinsurgency.

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): Since I first wrote this monograph in 2003, my thinking on terminology has shifted significantly. In particular, I have ceased using the terms "jihad" or "jihadist" to describe the enemy. I explained why in my note on terminology in my preface to *The Accidental Guerrilla* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), where I also explained that throughout that book I used the term *tafīr* to describe the enemy's ideology and the phrase "tafīr terrorist" to refer to those who use terrorism to further that ideology. As I explained in that note, the doctrine of *tafīr* disobeys the Qur'anic injunction against compulsion in religion (Shūrah al-Baqarah: 256) and instead holds that Muslims whose beliefs differ from the *tafīr*'s are infidels who must be killed. *Tafīrism* is a heresy within Islam: it was outlawed in the 2003 *Aman Message*, an initiative of King Abdullah II of Jordan, which brought together more than five hundred ulamas (Islamic scholars) and Muslim political leaders from the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab League in an unprecedented consensus agreement, a "unanimous agreement by all Muslims everywhere as represented by their acknowledged most senior religious authorities and political leaders." Al Qaeda is *tafīr*, and its members are universally so described by other Muslims whom they routinely terrorize. In my view, and (compellingly for me) in the daily vocabulary of most ordinary local people, religious leaders, and tribal leaders with whom I have worked in the field, "tafīrism" is the best descriptor for the ideology currently threatening the Islamic world. I prefer it to the terms "jihad," "jihadist," *jihadi*, or *mujāhidīn* (literally "holy war" or "holy warrior"), which cede to the enemy the sacred status they crave, and to *irāhī* (terrorist) or *hīrāhā* (terrorism), which address Al Qaeda's violence but not its ideology. It is also preferable to the terms *salaf* or "salafist," which refer to a belief that true Muslims should live like the first four generations of Muslims, the "pious ancestors" (as *salaf as-salih*). Most extremists are *salaf*, but few *salaf* believers are *tafīr*, and even fewer are terrorists: most, while fundamentalist conservatives, have no direct association with terrorism.

- Complex adaptive systems modeling shows that the global nature of the present Islamist jihad, and hence its dangerous character, derives from the links in the system—energy pathways that allow disparate groups to function in an aggregated fashion across intercontinental distances—rather than the elements themselves.
- Therefore, countering global insurgency does not demand the destruction of every Islamist insurgent from the Philippines to Chechnya. Rather, it demands a strategy of disaggregation (delinking or dismantling) to prevent the dispersed and disparate elements of the jihad movement from functioning as a global system. Applying this approach to the current war generates a new and different range of policy options and strategic choices.

The argument is in four parts. In Part 1, I demonstrate that a worldwide Islamist jihad movement exists, and in Part 2, I show that it is best understood as an insurgency. In Part 3, I use complex adaptive systems theory to develop a systems model of insurgency. On the basis of this systems model, in Part 4, I then propose "disaggregation" as an appropriate strategy for countering the global Islamist insurgency. The chapter ends with conclusions and recommendations.

PART 1: ANATOMY OF THE GLOBAL JIHAD

We are not fighting so that you will offer us something.

We are fighting to eliminate you.

—Hussein Massawi, Hezbollah (2003)

A Global Movement

Usama bin Laden, leader of the World Islamic Front (commonly known as Al Qaeda, "the Base," or Qa'idat al-jihad, "the Base of jihad") declared war on the West on 23 February 1998. The declaration was made in a statement entitled "World Islamic Front Declaration of War against Jews and Crusaders."¹ Bin Laden's deputy Ayman al Zawahiri, former leader of the organization Egyptian Islamic jihad, subsequently published a strategy chapter describing a two-phase strategy for global jihad against the West. Neither statement was treated particularly seriously at the time,

but in retrospect each provides an insight into a developing global pattern of Islamist militancy.

Bin Laden's declaration of war announced a global campaign against the United States and the West. It issued a *fatwa* to all Muslims, calling for jihad, thereby indicating that bin Laden claimed religious authority (needed to issue a *fatwa*) and political authority as a Muslim ruler (needed to declare a jihad).⁵ Subsequent Al Qa'eda statements refer to bin Laden as the sheikh or emir (prince or commander) of the World Islamic Front, indicating a claim to political and military authority over Islamist militant fighters throughout the world. Thus Al Qa'eda's statement declares a worldwide state of war against the West and simultaneously claims political and military authority over the forces engaged in that war. Unlike a traditional declaration of war, the declaration also claims authority over a worldwide Islamist movement for jihad.

Zawahiri's statement, issued shortly after 9/11, announced a specific strategic program for this war. Zawahiri, identified as the principal Al Qa'eda operational planner, articulated a two-phase strategy.⁶ In the first phase, the global jihad would focus on the greater Middle East Area. "This spirit of *jihad* would... turn things upside down in the region and force the US out of it. This would be followed by the earth-shattering event, which the West trembles at: the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Egypt."⁷ Thus the first stage of the campaign would reestablish the caliphate, the historical source of spiritual and temporal authority for all Muslims, which existed from the death of Muhammad (in A.D. 632) until A.D. 1924, when it was dissolved by the Turkish Republic after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.⁸

The second stage of the strategic plan would use the "restored" caliphate as a launchpad for jihad against the West, in order to remake the world order with the Muslim world in a dominant position. "If God wills it, such a state... could lead the Islamic world in a jihad against the West. It could also rally the world Muslims around it. Then history would make a new turn, God willing, in the opposite direction against the empire of the United States and the world's Jewish government."⁹

A related document, "General Guide to the Struggle of Jema'ah Islamiyah" (Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah), issued by Al Qa'eda's Southeast Asian ally Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI) in 2001, articulates a similar interpretation of the caliphate concept. This

document states JI's objectives as the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia, followed by the creation of a pan-Islamic state in Southeast Asia (*daula Islamiya nusantara*) covering Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore. Once this Islamist superstate is created, JI's aim is to further the establishment of a global pan-Islamic caliphate.¹⁰

Many aspects of Al Qa'eda's program could be disputed. The legitimacy of its claimed authority over Muslims and Islamist fighters, the veracity of its claim to have initiated the jihad, the viability of its two-phase strategy, the true extent of its intended pan-Islamic caliphate, or the sincerity of its stated aims could be questioned, for example. Nevertheless, according to open-source information, Al Qa'eda has a presence (in the form of sympathizers, sleeper cells, terrorist cadres, or active fighters) in at least forty countries. Earlier U.S. statements claimed an Al Qa'eda presence in sixty countries, and recent assessments have concluded that Al Qa'eda is still functioning globally, though disrupted by the destruction of its base in Afghanistan.¹¹ Indeed, a recent article in the Al Qa'eda military journal *Al-Battar* argued that the destruction of the Afghan sanctuary has enabled a global expansion for Al Qa'eda:

In the beginning of their war against Islam, [the Crusaders] had announced that one of their main goals was to destroy the Al-Qa'eda organization in Afghanistan; and now, look what happened? Thanks to God, instead of being limited to Afghanistan, Al-Qa'eda broke out into the entire Islamic world and was able to establish an international expansion, in several countries, sending its brigades into every Islamic country, destroying the Blasphemers' fortresses, and purifying the Muslims' countries.¹²

ISLAMIST THEATRES OF OPERATION

This worldwide pattern of militant Islamist movements appears to function through regional "theatres of operation" rather than as a monolithic bloc. Theatres are regions where operatives from one country cooperate with operatives from neighboring countries or conduct activities in neighboring countries. Evidence suggests that Islamist groups within the theatres follow general ideological or strategic approaches that conform to the pronouncements of Al Qa'eda and share a common tactical style and

operational lexicon. But there is no clear evidence that Al Qa'eda directly controls operations in each theatre. Indeed, as will be seen, the global jihad appears to be not a single monolithic organization but a much more complex phenomenon.

The principal Islamist theatres so far identified are as follows.

- **The Americas.** North America is most prominent as the scene of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but significant other Al Qa'eda activity has occurred elsewhere in the Americas, including attempts to infiltrate the United States from Mexico and Canada. Latin America has also been identified as a major center for Islamist training, infiltration, supply, and political subversion.¹³ In particular, Al Qa'eda has a strong presence in the tri-border area of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil—where there is a large Arabic Muslim population. There are regional Al Qa'eda affiliates (like the Mohammed Atta Brigades in El Salvador), there is evidence of cooperation between Al Qa'eda and Hezbollah, and there is evidence that the Panama Canal and Western hotel chains have been reconnoitred by Al Qa'eda affiliates in preparation for a possible attack.¹⁴

- **Western Europe.** This theatre (except the Iberian Peninsula, which seems to be linked more closely to the North African theatre) appears to function primarily as a theatre for political organization, subversion, and fundraising. The 9/11 hijackers passed through western Europe before the attack and are thought to have trained and prepared there. The United Kingdom has long been a significant area of Al Qa'eda activity, including political subversion, recruitment, organization, and web-based propaganda activity. Few terrorist or insurgent attacks directly linked to Al Qa'eda have occurred in western Europe, although terrorist cells and militant underground groups exist.* There is also a growing pattern of sectarian violence by radical Islamists against liberals within Western European society, most notably in the Netherlands and Belgium.

- **Australasia.** Although Australians and New Zealanders suffered heavily in the October 2002 Bali bombing, Australasia has seen no direct terrorist attacks. However, at least one Al Qa'eda-linked JI cell has been uncovered in Australia; several arrests of alleged radical and terrorist cells within Australia's immigrant populations have occurred; Australians fought with the Taliban and (in the 1980s) with Afghan mujahideen against the Soviets; and JI has used Australia for training, fundraising, and political subversion. There is also evidence that JI has used remote locations in Australia to test chemical and possibly biological warfare agents. In 2000, New Zealand police arrested several refugees of Middle Eastern origin, after discovering evidence that they were conducting reconnaissance of the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor in Sydney with the intent to create a nuclear incident during the 2000 Olympic Games.

- **Iberian Peninsula and Maghreb.** The Iberian Peninsula and the Maghreb (Muslim Northwest Africa) appear to function as a single theatre, with North Africans implicated in the May 2004 Madrid bombing, a subsequent Islamist attempted bombing and gun battle with police, and an assassination attempt on judges of the Spanish supreme court. Besides the Madrid attacks, this theatre has been fairly active, with major terrorist bombings in Casablanca, Morocco; ongoing Islamist insurgencies in Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Morocco; and terrorist attacks in Tunisia. Al Qa'eda has a subordinate "regional franchise" in this theatre, and the theatre is used for training and political subversion as well as active terrorism and insurgency. There is also ongoing sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

- **Greater Middle East.** This theatre—including Turkey, the Levant, Israel, and Palestine, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and Iran—is by far the most active. Ongoing Islamist insurgencies exist in Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel and Palestine. Terrorist activity—including bombings, suicide attacks, kidnappings, beheadings, and raids on expatriate housing—is frequent throughout this theatre. Al Qa'eda has designated regional affiliates in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kurdistan and probably also has a presence in Iran, Yemen, Jordan, and Israel and Palestine. The 9/11 hijackers passed through Iran and may have received assistance from elements within that country. However, importantly,

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): Tragically, of course, since this monograph was written, we have seen numerous actual or attempted terrorist attacks in western Europe, including the London subway attacks of 7 July 2005, the failed London attack of 22 July 2005, and the August 2006 airline plot, along with plots in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Western Europe appears to be very much alive and well as a terrorist operational theatre as of 2009.

much of the insurgent and terrorist action in this theatre is not sponsored, directed, or controlled by Al Qa'eda. Moreover, there is an entire separate (though interlinked) pattern of Shia terrorism and insurgency across this region, and some Shia groups—especially Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas—have global ambition and reach.¹⁵ Indeed, there is “increasing evidence that, in spite of their religious differences, Hizballah and Al Qa'eda could be sharing operational information and cooperating in fundraising and recruitment efforts.”¹⁶

- **East Africa.** Kenya and Tanzania suffered simultaneous terrorist bombings on U.S. embassies in August 1998. These attacks were coordinated by Al Qa'eda from a base in Sudan, which in addition to an Al Qa'eda presence has an ongoing Islamist insurgency against Christian and animist Sudanese. Kenya suffered a subsequent attack on the Kilimanjaro Palace Hotel in Mombasa in 2002 and probably has an ongoing Al Qa'eda presence. Al Qa'eda has also claimed a presence in Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. Muslim (although not Islamist) militias in Somalia and its separatist province of Puntland provide a “failed state” environment favorable to the development of Islamist terrorist and extremist cells.* The East African and Middle Eastern theatres overlap substantially, with strong connections between Yemen, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa. Nevertheless, there is a distinct regional dynamic in East Africa that is separate to the Middle Eastern dynamic, and this area is a jihad theatre in its own right.

- **The Caucasus and European Russia.** The separatist insurgency affecting Chechnya, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and other parts of the North Caucasus was initially nationalist rather than Islamist in character but has been infiltrated and co-opted by elements allied to Al Qa'eda. After the 1994–96 Chechen War, Chechnya briefly enjoyed autonomous self-government, but it became a haven for Islamist movements and a launching pad for terrorist attacks within

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): Since 2004, the situation in the Horn of Africa has developed significantly, with the emergence in Somalia of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), which gained control of Mogadishu in 2005 and expelled the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government to Bardera. In July 2006, the U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia overthrew the UIC, but since that time al-Shabab (“The Youth” [Jama'at al-Shabab al-Mujahideen]) has emerged from a group of members of the UIC who went underground and formed an insurgency after the UIC was toppled. Somali piracy has also become a focus of international attention, with the deployment of an international naval task force in the wake of numerous attacks by pirates on international shipping in the Gulf of Aden. In Kenya, Tanzania, and some other parts of the East African coast, Al Qa'eda operational cells or other extremist presence has also been noted.

European Russia. This led to the second Chechen War, commencing in 1999 and still ongoing, which has seen further Islamist infiltration of Chechnya, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Incidentally, the use of Chechnya as a terrorist haven during its period of self-rule compromised—perhaps fatally—the Chechen separatist cause, which is now seen largely as a cover for Islamist terrorist activity.* Numerous terrorist attacks have occurred across European Russia, carried out by groups linked to the Chechen insurgency. These have included a spate of suicide bombings, aircraft bombings, and hijackings; the 2002 Dubrovka theatre siege; and the atrocious 2004 massacre of hundreds of school children in Beslan, North Ossetia.

- **South and Central Asia.** Bin Laden's declaration of war of 23 February 1998 was cosigned by leaders from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and South Asia has long been a key jihad theatre. Afghanistan was the principal Al Qa'eda sanctuary until October 2001. A symbiosis developed between the Taliban government and numerous Islamist groups that shared facilities, and allied themselves, with Al Qa'eda. Prominent among these was Lashkar e Tayiba, which since the fall of the Taliban has become Al Qa'eda's principal South Asian ally. The Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) on the Afghan-Pakistan border have become a haven for Al Qa'eda, who are cooperating with Taliban remnants fighting as guerrillas in the area. Bin Laden and Zawahiri are believed to be in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, hiding in an area administered by a federation of six Islamist parties that rejects Pakistani sovereignty, supports the Taliban remnants, and indirectly protects Al Qa'eda. Pakistan itself has experienced Islamist subversion, agitation, and terrorist activity, as has neighboring India. The ongoing separatist insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir has been infiltrated by Islamist elements, and Kashmir has become a major training and administrative area for Al Qa'eda affiliates. The neighboring republics of former Soviet Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): As of 2009, the Chechen War is in remission in Chechnya itself, though Chechens and Dagestanis continue to fight, both in the Caucasus and in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Russian operations have severely disabled the insurgency, and Russia officially ended its counterinsurgency operation on 16 April 2009. Violence is still sporadic but at a much lower level than at the original time of writing. The appointment as president of the Chechen Republic of Russia-backed local strongman Ramzan Kadyrov, son of the assassinated former president Akhmat Kadyrov and a former insurgent and militia leader, has contributed to the suppression of violence but has also prompted claims of severe human rights abuses and political repression.

Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan) and the Xinjiang Uighur region of China have also seen Islamist subversion, terrorist activity, and low-level insurgency.*

- **Southeast Asia.** There are Islamist insurgencies in Indonesia, the Philippines, and southern Thailand, with substantial terrorist activity in these countries and in Singapore, Malaysia, and Cambodia. There is also a broader pattern of Islamic militancy, Muslim separatist insurgent movements, and sectarian conflict. This includes major separatist movements such as the Free Aceh Movement. Indonesia has a substantial underground Islamist movement, Darul Islam, which dates back to the World War II and is still active in several regions of Indonesia. The principal terrorist grouping in this regional theatre is JI, which operates across the entire region, maintains links to Al Qa'eda and other global groups, cooperates with and co-opts local movements and grievances, and has links into other theatres including South Asia and the Middle East. As discussed above, JI has articulated a pan-Islamic agenda that aligns closely with that of Al Qa'eda.

However, the two groups are better understood as allies, rather than seeing JI as an Al Qa'eda subordinate or franchise. The Abu Sayyaf Group is a Philippines-based ally of JI, and there are two other major Islamic separatist groups operating in the Mindanao region of the Philippines. Several other armed Islamic sectarian groups have engaged in armed conflict, insurgency and subversion in this region.^{††}

The first three theatres (the Americas, western Europe, and Australasia) do not have ongoing active insurgencies. Indeed, Australasia and western Europe appear to be predominantly theatres of subversion, fundraising and organizational development (representing Al Qa'eda's strategic hinterland) whereas North America appears to be a primary target for terrorist activity.

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): This description of the situation in South Asia is of course markedly out of date. I have described the situation as of 2008 in detail in *The Accidental Guerrilla*, chap. 2; however, the situation is rapidly developing and continues to change unpredictably in the wake of the August 2009 Afghanistan presidential election and the troop surge announced by President Obama and key NATO allies in December 2009.

†† AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): The insurgency situation in Southeast Asia has also developed significantly, with JI in Indonesia collapsing in terms of popular support and operational capability, although it retains the ability to strike at Western targets within Indonesia. The Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines has also been degraded through successful cooperation between local law enforcement, local military forces, national governments, and U.S. military, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies. The insurgency in southern Thailand has worsened, in part because of political instability at the national level, and was described in detail in *The Accidental Guerrilla*, chap. 4.

The remaining six theatres, however, all have active Islamist insurgencies as well as Al Qa'eda presence and terrorist activity. Indeed, globally, there is a greater than 85 percent correlation between the presence of Islamist insurgency in a given theatre and terrorist activity or Al Qa'eda presence in the same area. Thus, with the exception of the 9/11 attacks themselves, all Al Qa'eda-linked terrorist attacks have occurred in theatres with ongoing Islamist insurgencies. Not all Islamist insurgency is linked to Al Qa'eda—but most Al Qa'eda activity occurs in areas of Islamist insurgency.

Besides this correlation with insurgency, there is a clear correlation between the geographical area of the historical caliphate, the broader pan-Islamic caliphate posited by Al Qa'eda, and Islamist insurgency (see fig. 6.1).

As the map indicates, every single Islamist insurgency in the world sits within the claimed pan-Islamic caliphate, while the most active theatres correspond to the historical caliphate. Taken at face value, this map seems to show that Al Qa'eda is indeed executing the strategy outlined by Zawahiri: re-establishing an Islamic caliphate and then using this as a springboard to extend Islamic control over the remainder of the globe. In fact, the reality turns out to be much more complex. Nonetheless, the map accurately portrays the existence of a global spread of Islamist movements, at least some of which are linked to a broader, globally focused movement that seeks to overturn the world order through subversion, terrorism, and insurgency.

Links between Theatres

The mere existence of a global spread of similar movements does not in itself constitute evidence for a global insurgency. To demonstrate the existence of a global jihad, it is necessary to show that these dispersed Islamist terrorist and insurgent groups are linked in some way. Indeed, the links are critical because (as discussed in the next section) the global nature of the jihad actually resides in the links, not the individual groups themselves. There are eight basic types of links that join these theatres, and groups within them, into an aggregated pattern of global jihad:

- **Ideological Links.** Insurgent and terrorist groups aligned with Al Qa'eda have common ideological roots. They are broadly Salafi in orientation, and many follow variants of Saudi Wahhabism. Even groups such as the Taliban, which is Deobandi in origin, adopt

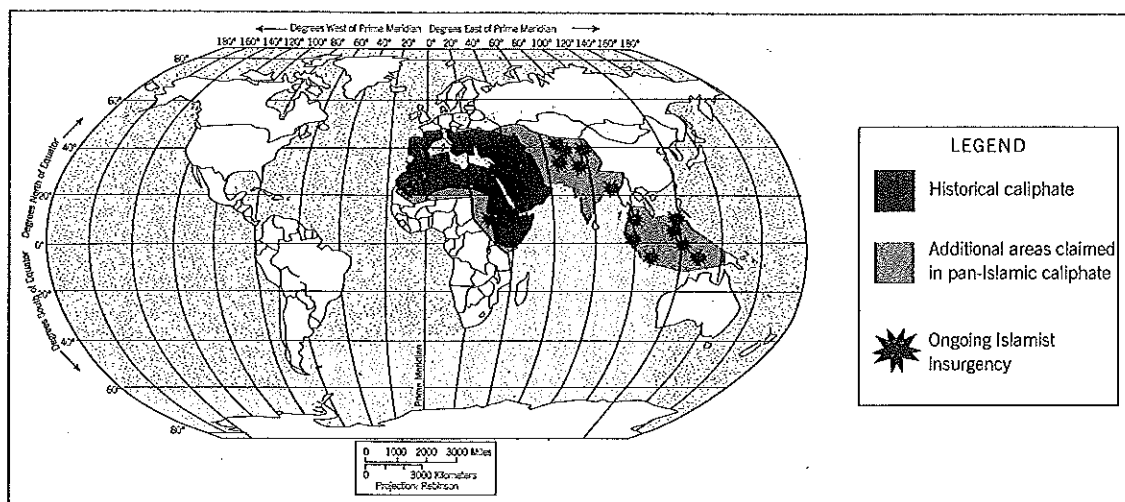


FIG 6.1 The Historical Caliphate, Superimposed on Islamist Insurgencies Worldwide

NOTE: THIS MAP DOES NOT INCLUDE SHI'A INSURGENCIES, TERRORIST GROUPS THAT HAVE NO KNOWN LINKS TO AL QA'EDA, OR MUSLIM INSURGENCIES THAT ARE PREDOMINANTLY SEPARATIST OR NATIONALIST IN CHARACTER.

a purist, authoritarian outlook. Ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb, Maulana Mawdudi, Abdullah Azzam, and the medieval theologian Ibn Taymiyya are influential in their thinking. These "jihadists" are so called because they tend to elevate the "lesser jihad" (armed struggle against unbelievers) into a virtual sixth pillar of Islam.¹⁷ Besides Islamic influences, these groups are influenced by communist revolutionary technique (adopting Soviet organizational methods and consciously acting as a "vanguard party" in the Leninist mode) and military theory. Many Islamist insurgents, particularly in Afghanistan, apply Che Guevara's concept of "focoist insurgency," while Carlos Marighella's *Mini-manual of the Urban Guerrilla* has also been very influential. Al Qaeda applies "leaderless resistance," first advanced by the American right-wing theorist Louis Beam, to an unprecedented degree. Finally, concepts such as "propaganda of the deed," which originated with the nineteenth-century European anarchists, are influential. The most important element of ideological commonality is that the Islamist groups described (and shown on the map in fig. 6.1) identify themselves with Al Qaeda, subscribe to its strategic program, and seek a global pan-Islamic caliphate as a prelude to remaking the Western-dominated world order.¹⁸

- **Linguistic and cultural links.** Because of their shared Islamic faith, jihad groups share Arabic as a common language.¹⁹ This allows groups from remote parts of the world to communicate effectively, train together, and share intelligence or planning resources. It also contributes to a shared consciousness—religious, political, and cultural. These groups also share an Islamic civilizational overlay, providing a common language, social outlook, and political theory for groups from diverse national cultures. Moreover, as these groups originate from what Michael Vlahos has called distinct "military subcultures" within Islam, they share a common sense of alienation from mainstream Islam's traditions of quietism or political moderation.²⁰
- **Personal history.** The personal histories of individuals across the jihad movements are closely linked. Many older mujahideen fought together against the Soviets in Afghanistan during the 1980s or trained together later in Afghanistan. Many key ideologues and leaders in the global jihad studied under Wahhabi clerics in Saudi Arabia and still maintain relationships with these

mentors—for example, JI leader Abu Bakar Bashir maintains a close relationship with his former teacher and seeks guidance before most major decisions. The senior leadership of Al Qa'eda all share this experience, and many have links dating back to the 1970s and opposition to the Egyptian and Saudi governments. Later generations of mujahideen fought together in Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Chechnya. Even within one country, many jihadists share a common military or personal history. For example, many JI members come from established families in the Indonesian Darul Islam movement (described above), went to school together, fought together in sectarian conflicts in Maluku or Sulawesi, and trained together in boarding schools or camps like Camp Abubakar in the Philippines. Thus friendships, webs of acquaintance, and networks of mutual obligation stretch worldwide between and among groups. Similarly, within jihad theatres, groups cooperate and develop bonds of shared experience and mutual obligation.

- **Family relationships.** Unsurprisingly, because of this shared history, many members of the global jihad movement are related to each other by birth or marriage. Often alliances between groups are cemented by marriage, as in the marriage of Usama bin Laden to the daughter of Taliban leader Mullah Omar. Similarly, some Indonesian jihadist leaders have wives from the Arabian Peninsula, particularly the Hadhramaut area on the Saudi-Yemen-Oman border. Again, intermarriage is common among Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Chechen jihad groups, cementing bonds of friendship and obligation between theatres. Sons of prominent leaders in the jihad movement often follow their fathers, and widows often avenge their husbands by becoming suicide bombers. This pattern has become so common in Chechnya and European Russia that such *mujahidat* (female jihad fighters), known as "Black Widows," have been implicated in numerous attacks and have gained independent status as a distinct subcategory of jihadist.²¹

- **Financial links.** Groups in different theatres frequently fund each other's activities. For example, Al Qa'eda is suspected to have provided funding to JI for the 2002 Bali bombing and is known to have funded terrorist groups in the Philippines. Similarly, some Islamic nongovernment organizations, including traditional Islamic *hawala* banking networks, charitable organizations, and religious networks, are used (willingly and unwittingly) as conduits for funding between and within jihad theatres globally.²² Many of these

nongovernment organizations are based in the Arabian Peninsula, including significant (and legitimate) charities such as al-Faramein and the Islamic Relief Organization. Indeed, oil wealth in the Middle East has provided the bulk of terrorist and insurgent funding over time, making the Arabian Peninsula a central hub in the web of financial links joining dispersed movements. The systems of traditional trade, as well as flows of remittance money from migrant workers worldwide, also represent conduits for insurgent and terrorist funding.²³ In addition, there is an intricate network of private patronage, financial obligation, and mutual commitment that links dispersed groups and individuals in geographically dispersed regions.

- **Operational and planning links.** As this analysis shows, Al Qa'eda is not a central headquarters or high command for the global jihad. Bin Laden does not issue directives to subordinate groups, tasking them to conduct insurgent or terrorist action. Rather, planning and operational tasking appears to happen through a system of sponsorship and financing, with Al Qa'eda providing funding, operational advice, targeting data, and specialist expertise to allied regional and local groups. Similarly, local groups appear to gather intelligence and targeting data and share it across theatres in the jihad. For example, the planned JI attacks foiled in Singapore in December 2001 were averted through the discovery of targeting data in an Al Qa'eda safe house in Afghanistan. A recent terrorist alert in the United States was sparked by the discovery of targeting data on American schools and public buildings on a captured terrorist's computer in Pakistan. The same arrest also prompted the capture of eight terrorists in Britain. So although there is no centralized command-and-control hierarchy, it appears that local groups plan and conduct their own operations but cooperate within and between regions. Simultaneously, global players like Al Qa'eda provide encouragement, tactical support, financing, and intelligence for specific high-value operations.²⁴

- **Propaganda.** Al Qa'eda exploits events in jihad theatres across the world for propaganda purposes in its communiqués and media materials. Groups across the jihad contribute to a common flow of propaganda materials, supporting each other's local causes and sharing grievances. For example, the web site Jihad Unspun is managed by a Canadian convert to Islam and provides reportage, analysis, comment, and "spin" on issues across all theatres of the

jihad.²⁵ Al Qa'eda issues a fortnightly propaganda bulletin on its official web site, *Sawat al-Jihad*, and publishes a jihadist women's magazine, *al-Khansa*. Similarly, a flow of cassette tapes, videos, and CDs—many depicting so-called martyrdom operations, as well as terrorist bombings, or the execution of infidel prisoners—moves throughout jihad groups worldwide. For example, the Russian Hell series of videos, many depicting the torture and execution of Russian troops captured in Chechnya, is popular viewing across South Asia, the Middle East, and Indonesia, and is current among certain militant extremist subcultures within the Australian Muslim community.²⁶ Imagery purporting to portray the oppression of Muslims in Israel and Palestine, Chechnya, Iraq, and the Balkans is also used to stir up resentment and motivate mujahideen in other theatres. The Zarqawi network inside Iraq, subsequently known as Al Qa'eda in Iraq, is also believed to maintain a media section that is responsible for the production of propaganda materials, including videos of the beheading of Western hostages. The Internet has become a potent tool that groups use for sharing propaganda and ideological material across international boundaries, contributing to a shared consciousness among dispersed groups within the jihad.*

- **Doctrine, techniques, and procedures.** Terrorist and insurgent groups worldwide can access a body of doctrine, techniques, and procedures that exists in hard copy and on the Internet, primarily in Arabic but also in other languages. It includes political guidance (like the "General Guide to the Struggle of Jema'ah Islamiyah," described earlier), military manuals (like the encyclopedic *Military Studies in the Jihad against the Tyrants*, discovered by police in Manchester, England, in 2002), and CD-ROM and videotaped materials.²⁷ In addition, Al Qa'eda publishes a fortnightly online military training manual, *Al-Battar*.²⁸ There is thus a common

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): Al Qa'eda and its associated movements have maintained a focus on propaganda since their formation, with the Al Qa'eda senior leadership group often acting more like a propaganda hub than like a command center, identifying themes in Western debate and playing these back at the West. Usama bin Laden has not issued a video communiqué for several years, and the West's ongoing pressure against Al Qa'eda leaders in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area has undoubtedly suppressed, to some extent, their activities. But the propaganda model has also shifted over time. A single narrative of oppression, redemption, and resistance against an infidel West bent on the destruction of Islam has taken hold in some parts of the world's Muslim community, fueled in part by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and by the ongoing violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories. This has empowered local activists who generate their own propaganda in general alignment with broad Al Qa'eda themes but do not take propaganda guidance from a central Al Qa'eda leadership. In this sense, what was once a jihadist "start-up" enterprise has now become self-sustaining and semi-independent.

tactical approach across Islamist groups worldwide, and tactics that first appear in one theatre permeate across the global movement, via the Internet and doctrinal publications.*

Local, Regional, and Global Players

Within each country in a jihad theatre there are local actors, issues, and grievances. Many of these have little to do with the objectives of the global jihad, and they often predate the jihad by decades or centuries. For example, Russians have been fighting Muslim guerrillas in the Caucasus since the 1850s, while there has been a Moro separatist issue in the Philippines for centuries. Local insurgent and terrorist groups—in some cases, little distinguishable from bandits—continue to operate in these areas, often with no connection to the global jihad. These local elements will probably remain intact, at some level, even if the global jihad movement is completely destroyed.

But what is new about today's environment is that, because of the links described above, a new class of regional, theatre-level actors has emerged. These groups do have links to the global jihad, often act as regional allies or affiliates of Al Qa'eda, and prey on local groups and issues to further the jihad. They also rely on supporting inputs from global players and might wither if their global sponsors were significantly disrupted. For example, in Indonesia the regional Al Qa'eda affiliate, JI, has fueled, exacerbated, and fostered sectarian conflicts in the Poso region of central Sulawesi in order to generate recruits, anti-Western propaganda, funding, and grievances that can be exploited within the Southeast Asia theatre. In turn, JI has received funding, guidance, expertise, and propaganda support from Al Qa'eda. In general, Al Qa'eda seems not to have direct dealings with local insurgent groups but to deal primarily with its regional affiliates in each theatre. This makes the operational (regional or theatre) level of the jihad a critical link.

Sitting above the theatre-level actors are global players like Al Qa'eda. But Al Qa'eda is simply the best known of several worldwide actors.

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): This disposition of tactics has only increased since this chapter was written, with the proliferation of tactics developed in Iraq (such as suicide bombings and the use of roadside improvised explosive devices) into Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and elsewhere. We have also seen the physical movement of fighters between theatres—former members of Al Qa'eda in Iraq into Yemen, Chechnya and Uzbekistan, Indonesians and Malaysians into the Philippines, Somalis into Kenya, and so on. These fighters bring with them knowledge of tactics, techniques and procedures and contribute to a general tactical style or "way of war" as practiced by these groups.

Al Qaeda has competitors, allies, and clones at the global level who would be able to step into the breach should Al Qaeda be destroyed tomorrow. For example, the Shia group Hezbollah has global reach, has worked closely with Sunni movements worldwide, sponsors approximately 80 percent of Palestinian terrorism (including that performed by Sunni groups such as Hamas), and has strong links to Iran. Hezbollah is one of several groups that could replace Al Qaeda in its niche of "top predator" as the jihad evolves.²⁹ Similarly, financial, religious, educational, and cultural networks (based largely in Arabia) function at the global level in uniting the effect of disparate actors across the jihad, and often have greater penetration and influence than Al Qaeda itself.

Thus, this analysis indicates that there is a global movement, and almost all Islamist insurgency and terrorism worldwide is linked to it. However, it comprises a group of aligned independent movements, not a single, unified organization. Global players link and exploit local players through regional affiliates—they rarely interact directly with local players but sponsor and support them through intermediaries. Each theatre has operational players who are able to tap into the global jihad, and these tend to be regional Al Qaeda affiliates. Saudi Arabia is a central node, with greater "reach" than Al Qaeda itself, although Saudi influence is a systemic effect, not necessarily based on conscious activity.* As Al Qaeda is disrupted, its clones and competitors will probably tend to move into its niche and assume some of its role.

Understanding the Jihad Phenomenon

So far, this chapter has shown that a globalized network of Islamist groups exists, that this network tends to operate through distinct regional theatres, and that there are multidimensional links that connect the operations of dispersed groups across theatres. In other words, the multifarious groups and activities of Islamists—including terrorists, subversives, political activists, and insurgents—in fact form a single global system. But we have also seen that this jihad is not a single unified movement or a hierarchical organization. Al Qaeda is not the headquarters for a unified worldwide organization. Indeed, many of the links that unite the

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): Despite the undoubtedly central role of Saudi Arabia in the early thinking of many *talaffi* terrorist groups, in practical terms, the epicenter of violent extremism worldwide increasingly resides in Pakistan. Many major terrorist attacks since 9/11, especially in Europe, India, and Central Asia, have included links to groups sponsored by or operating in Pakistan. There is debate over whether the center of gravity of the global jihadist endeavor has truly shifted to Pakistan, but there is little doubt that South Asia is one of the most important, and dangerous, theatres of terrorist activity.

dispersed movements are personal, private, historical, or ideological—not hierarchical or organizational.

In seeking to understand the jihad, Western analysts have often struggled to characterize it. Is it a formal organization? Is it a mass movement? Is it a loose confederation of allies? Is it—as Peter Bergen argues—a franchised business model with centralized corporate support and autonomous regional divisions?³⁰ Is it—as others have argued—merely a myth, a creation of Western counterintelligence agencies and authoritarian governments?³¹ The picture of the jihad this chapter has drawn suggests that far from being a mythical bogeyman, the network is all too real, global in reach, and unprecedented in scale. But Western models—mass movement, hierarchical organization, business structure—are unable to fully describe it. Rather, the analysis would suggest, traditional Islamic or Middle Eastern social models may be more applicable.

Karl Jackson (during fieldwork in 1968) and I (during fieldwork in 1995–97) both independently demonstrated that a model of traditional patron-client authority relationships is applicable to Islamic insurgent movements.³² Under this model, the global jihad could be seen as a variant on a traditional Middle Eastern patronage network. In this construct, the jihad comprises an intricate, ramified web of dependency and—critically—it is the patterns of patronage and dependency that are its central defining features rather than the organizational groupings—the insurgent cells or their activities.³³ Many analysts have tended to see the marriage relationships, money flows, alumni relationships, and sponsorship links in the jihad as weakly subordinate to a military core of terrorist activity. Rather, this analysis would argue, the military activity is actually subordinate, being merely one of the shared activities that the network engages in, while the core is the patronage network.

As noted, analysts tend to apply Western models to the jihad—mass movement, hierarchical organization, franchised business structure. In fact, the jihad appears to be more like a tribal group, an organized crime syndicate, or an extended family than like a military organization.* Like a

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): There are strong analogies between police work, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism. Insurgents tend to operate like gang structures, and police gang suppression approaches that focus on community security, network displacement, and a layered method of overt police presence, criminal informants, and undercover operations is analogous to counterinsurgency, especially in urban environments. Likewise, some terrorist networks share structural and operational similarities with organized crime networks, and police methods against organized crime syndicates—financial and logistical controls, counterintelligence operations, detainee exploitation, penetration by informants, and targeted disruption—are similar to the methods used against terrorists.

mafia clan, the Islamist network resides in a web of traditional authority structures, family allegiances, and tribal honor, not the essentially secondary activity of criminal behavior. Thus, the Islamist network resides in the pattern of relationships itself—jihad is simply one activity that the network does; it is not the network itself.

PART 2: GLOBAL ISLAMIST INSURGENCY

If you were afraid to carry out the jihad in the Arabian Peninsula, what is your excuse for not going to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Chechnya?

—Sheikh Saud al Otaibi, emir of Al Qa'eda in the Arabian Peninsula (2004)

Part I has demonstrated the existence of a globalized Islamist jihad network, forming an intricate web of dependencies and patronage, and oriented (as a loose confederation of allies) toward the overthrow of the existing world order and its replacement with a pan-Islamic caliphate. As this part will show, this Islamist jihad is best understood as a global insurgency.³⁴

"Insurgency" can be defined as "a popular movement that seeks to overthrow the status quo through subversion, political activity, insurrection, armed conflict, and terrorism."³⁵ By definition, insurgent movements are grass roots uprisings that seek to overthrow established governments or societal structures. All are popular uprisings that employ the weapons of the weak (subversion, guerrilla tactics, terrorism) against the established power of states and conventional military forces. Many, including the Islamist jihad, draw their foot soldiers from deprived socioeconomic groups and their leadership from alienated, radicalized elites.

Conversely, "terrorism" can be defined as "politically motivated violence against civilians, conducted with the intention to coerce through fear," and is in the tactical repertoire of virtually every insurgency (and, of course, some governments).³⁶ Western analysts tend to distinguish insurgency from terrorism as research disciplines, but for practitioners, this distinction is (literally) academic. Terrorism is a component in almost all insurgencies, and insurgent objectives (i.e., a desire to change the status quo through subversion and violence) lie behind almost all nonstate terrorism.³⁷

By this definition, the global jihad is clearly an insurgency—a popular movement that seeks to change the status quo through violence and

subversion, whereas terrorism is one of its key tactics (hence a component part, or subset, of insurgency). But whereas traditional insurgencies sought to overthrow governments or social structures in one state or region, this insurgency seeks to transform the entire Islamic world and remake its relationship with the rest of the globe. It looks back to a golden age, seeking to reestablish a caliphate throughout the Muslim world and, ultimately, expand the realm of Islam (Dar al Islam) to all human society. The stated Islamist strategy is to provoke a clash between the West and Islam, generate a world Islamic front, and so mobilize Muslims—whom the Islamists see as oppressed victims—to overthrow the global status quo.³⁸ The scale of the Islamist agenda is new, but their grievances and methods would be familiar to any insurgent in history.

In addition, bin Laden's own fatwa of August 1996 explicitly calls for insurgency in the cause of jihad:

it must be obvious to you that, due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces, a suitable means of fighting must be adopted, that is using fast moving light forces that work under complete secrecy. In other words, to initiate guerrilla warfare, where the sons of the nation, and not the military forces, take part in it.³⁹

The jihad, therefore, can be described as a form of globalized insurgency.

Al Qa'eda and similar groups feed on local grievances, integrate them into broader ideologies, and link disparate conflicts through globalized communications, finances, and technology. In this, Al Qa'eda resembles the Communist Third International (Comintern) of the twentieth century—a holding company and clearinghouse for world revolution. But there is a key difference. The Comintern was a state-sponsored support organization for local revolutions and insurgencies, but the global jihad is itself an insurgent movement. As described, the tools of globalization—the Internet, globalized communications, international finance, freedom of movement—allow tactics, intelligence, personnel, and finances to be shared between groups across the jihad. Likewise, the globalized insurgency exploits events in one theatre for propaganda in others.⁴⁰ Moreover, the Comintern was sponsored by the Soviet Union, whereas the Islamist jihad (as discussed later) is itself a virtual state.

Thus the distinguishing feature of the Islamists is not their use of terrorism, a tactic they share with dozens of movements worldwide. Rather,

it is that they represent a global insurgency against the world order, that—like all other insurgent movements—uses terrorism, besides other tactics ranging from subversion and propaganda to open warfare.

Competing Paradigms: Terrorism and Insurgency

The study of terrorism as an independent academic discipline emerged in the 1970s in response to the growing phenomenon of international terrorism.⁴¹ Before the 1970s, terrorism was seen primarily as a component within localized insurgencies. The term was used primarily for propaganda purposes—to label an insurgent as illegitimate or portray an insurgent's methods as "beyond the pale."⁴² British use of the term "terrorists" to describe insurgents in Northern Ireland, Cyprus, and Malaya served to underline this point. Indeed, in Malaya the principal counterinsurgency manual was entitled *The Conduct of Anti-terrorist* [not "Counterinsurgency"] *Operations in Malaya*, indicating that the two activities were synonymous.⁴³ In this period, insurgency and terrorism were seen as practically the same phenomenon, the term "terrorism" was primarily of political and propaganda value.

But the international terrorism that emerged in the 1970s included groups such as the Baader-Meinhof Group (the Red Army Faction), the Italian Red Brigades, the Japanese Red Army, and other groups with little apparent link to any mass movement or insurgency. Rather, they were "disembodied" terrorist groups comprising small cells of alienated individuals within Western society, rather than insurgent movements with definite achievable aims. Although there were still substantial groups of insurgency-based terrorists—such as the PLO, rightly regarded by specialists as one of the most important and dangerous groups⁴⁴—in Western popular culture the conception of terrorism became that of disembodied cells of radicalized, nihilistic individuals. These individuals, almost by virtue of their very alienation from their parent societies, could not and did not tap into a mass base that drew its legitimacy from popular grievances, as traditional insurgents (and today's transnational jihadist terrorists) do. Thus, a new paradigm emerged that has since been highly influential in public discourse.

In this popular conception, shared by many Western legislators and policy-makers, although not by terrorism specialists, terrorists are seen as unrepresentative, aberrant individuals, misfits within society. Partly because they are seen as unrepresentative and partly to discourage emulation, "we do not negotiate with terrorists." Terrorists are criminals,

whose methods and objectives are equally unacceptable. They use violence partly to shock and influence populations and governments, and for propaganda and symbolic effect, but also because they are psychologically or morally flawed or evil. In this paradigm, terrorism is primarily a law enforcement problem, and we therefore adopt a case-based approach in which the key objective is to apprehend the perpetrators of terrorist attacks.*

This paradigm has been highly influential in our approach to the "War on Terrorism"—largely because of the word "terrorism" in this name. Thus we have tended to elevate one component of the global insurgency—the use of terrorism as a tactic—until it has become identified as the sole issue, ignoring other aspects of the conflict. Accordingly, we have sought to apprehend Usama bin Laden, and some commentators regard the failure to catch him as evidence of failure in prosecuting the "War on Terror." Likewise, Australia's response to the Bali bombing of 2002 has been primarily focused on "bringing the terrorists to justice"—hence the central role of police agencies in a case-based, legal-evidence-based approach.[†]

The insurgency paradigm is quite different. Under this approach, insurgents are regarded as representative of deeper issues or grievances within society. Governments seek to defeat insurgents primarily through marginalizing them from their support base, protecting the people from guerrilla intimidation, and "winning the hearts and minds" of the broader population, a process that by necessity often involves compromise and negotiation. We regard insurgents' methods as unacceptable, but their grievances are often seen as legitimate, provided they are pursued peacefully. This is why mainstream society often accepts insurgents

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): This description of terrorism as a popular paradigm was already something of a caricature when it was first written but is even more so now, as a new generation of extremely sophisticated terrorism analysts have emerged over the period since 9/11, with fresh and innovative approaches to understanding terrorist behavior. Still, in its original intent, this passage (like the description of insurgency and counterinsurgency below it) is designed to highlight the differences in popular perception between the methods of counterterrorism (counternetwork operations, mauling, and the pursuit of individuals and cells as high-value targets through intelligence, law enforcement, and special operations) and counterinsurgency (population protection, political marginalization of the insurgent, addressing of basic grievances, reduction of insurgent recruiting and propaganda opportunities, denial of resources, and so on). In practice, any counterinsurgency campaign today involves highly kinetic, intelligence-led counternetwork operations, while any sensible counterterrorism campaign also seeks to isolate terrorists from support networks and deny them freedom of movement and action. Thus counterterrorism and counterinsurgency techniques merge and blur at the tactical level, even though the two approaches are still seen as competing paradigms by the public, news organizations, and many policy-makers.

† AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): This is not to suggest that such approaches are invalid or ineffective. Indeed, in Australia's case, police and intelligence assistance to Indonesia proved very important in reducing the II threat to a far lower level over the period 2002–2007. However, such tactical counterterrorism efforts do not substitute for a broader global strategic approach to reducing the appeal and minimizing the threat of globalized insurgency.

who renounce violence but seek the same objectives through political means—individuals like Nelson Mandela, Xanana Gusmao, and Gerry Adams. Similarly, under this paradigm, we see insurgents as using violence within a carefully integrated politico-military strategy, rather than as psychopaths. In this paradigm, insurgency is a whole-of-government problem rather than a military or law enforcement issue. On this basis, we adopt a strategy-based approach to counterinsurgency in which the key objective is to defeat or marginalize the insurgent's strategy rather than to "apprehend the perpetrators" of specific acts.

Table 6.1 summarizes the principal differences between the terrorism and insurgency paradigms. However, as noted, the terrorism paradigm largely represents a popular stereotype rather than an analysis shared by most specialist analysts, some of whom tend to regard terrorism as a subset or subcategory of insurgency.

Clearly, the insurgency paradigm provides a better mental model for the current conflict than does the terrorism stereotype. Indeed, current

TABLE 6.1 Terrorism and insurgency as competing paradigms

Terrorism	Insurgency
<i>Terrorist</i> is seen as an unrepresentative aberration.	<i>Insurgent</i> represents deeper issues in society.
No negotiation with terrorists.	Winning hearts and minds is critical.
Methods and objectives are both unacceptable.	Methods are unacceptable; objectives are not necessarily so.
<i>Terrorists</i> are psychologically and morally flawed, with personal (psychopathic) tendencies toward violence.	<i>Insurgents</i> use violence within an integrated politico-military strategy—violence is instrumental not central to their approach.
Terrorism is a law enforcement problem.	Insurgency is a whole-of-government problem.
<i>Counterterrorism</i> adopts a case-based approach focused on catching the perpetrators of terrorist actions.	<i>Counterinsurgency</i> uses a strategy-based approach focused on defeating insurgents' strategy—catching them is secondary.

actions in the "War on Terrorism" appear disparate if viewed through a pure terrorism paradigm. Some (like international law enforcement cooperation, manhunting and drone strikes, and actions to counter terrorist financing) fit the terrorism paradigm neatly, while others (the Iraq War, counterproliferation initiatives, building influence in Central Asia, containment of North Korea and Iran) appear unrelated to an antiterrorism agenda and are thus viewed with suspicion by some. However, if viewed through the lens of counterinsurgency, these actions make perfect sense. They fit neatly into three streams of classical counterinsurgency: pacification, winning hearts and minds, and the denial of sanctuary and external sponsorship.

For example, whatever one thinks of its effectiveness, the intent behind the Iraq campaign may be seen as an effort to restructure the milieu that created the jihad, by removing underlying antidemocratic tendencies that cause Islamist unrest (a form of pacification, in intent if not effect). It may also have been intended to address the principal grievances raised by Al Qaeda in its "World Islamic Front Declaration of War against Jews and Crusaders" of 23 February 1998, which mostly related to the sanctions regime against Saddam's Iraq (winning hearts and minds). Action against Iraq also allowed the removal of U.S. troops from Saudi Arabia (another key Al Qaeda grievance) and sent a key message to state sponsors of terrorism (denial of sanctuary and sponsorship). Moreover, at a strategic level, the campaign in Iraq has allowed Western forces to fight the jihad on ground of our choosing, within the territory of the old caliphate now claimed by Al Qaeda rather than on Western territory or in south or central Asia. This has given the West the strategic initiative—jihadists are focusing on Iraq, not on attacking the West directly.* One might argue with the competence or wisdom of the Iraq enterprise, or the clarity with which its objectives were communicated to the public, as many analysts

* AUTHOR'S NOTE (2009): The intent of this passage is not to defend the decision to attack Iraq or the poor performance in the early execution of the counterinsurgency campaign following the initial, highly successful Coalition invasion of Iraq. I am on the record elsewhere (*Small Wars Journal* and *Accidental Guerrilla*) arguing that the invasion was a strategic error. Rather, the aim is to show that a counterinsurgency paradigm makes much more strategic sense in explaining the decision to go to war than a traditional counterterrorism approach—thus, a set of strategic ideas associated with traditional counterterrorism (sanctuary denial, marginalizing the enemy, denial of sponsorship by external actors, and "winning hearts and minds")—may have lain, perhaps at the level of unexamined assumption, behind the war. If these concepts had been explicitly examined within a counterinsurgency lens, some decision-makers might have concluded, as I do in the next section of this chapter, that traditional counterinsurgency actually transfers poorly to the global level. In the event, Western military forces and Western political capital have been invested heavily in the outcome of the war. Although we salvaged a draw during the 2007 "Surge" and handed off a relatively stable environment to the Iraqi government in 2008, the Iraq war is far from over for Iraqis, and ultimately its strategic impact may not be clear for a considerable time.

and political opponents of the United States have done. Nevertheless, Iraq undeniably fits better into a counterinsurgency paradigm than a traditional counterterrorist one. The same applies to action against North Korea (denial of sanctuary and sponsorship—in this case, transfer of nuclear and chemical technology to Islamists) and other apparently disparate actions in the campaign.⁴⁵

If the "War on Terrorism" is a global insurgency, then the counterinsurgency paradigm (which, as noted, includes action against terrorism as a subset of insurgency) is a better mental model for this war than is counterterrorism. Indeed, the key to defeating global jihad may not lie in traditional counterterrorism (police work, intelligence, special operations, or security measures) at all. Instead, counterinsurgency theory may provide the most useful insights. As I will explain in part 4, a counterinsurgency approach would generate a subtle, but substantially, different range of actions in the "War on Terrorism."

Counterinsurgency Redux

Although counterinsurgency is more appropriate than counterterrorism in this conflict, traditional counterinsurgency techniques from the 1960s cannot simply be applied to today's problems in a simplistic or mechanistic fashion. This is because counterinsurgency, in its "classical" form, is optimized to defeat insurgency in one country, not to fight a global insurgency. The best practice counterinsurgency techniques that emerged from the "wars of national liberation" of 1945-1990, attacked insurgency through unified military, intelligence, political, socioeconomic, "hearts-and-minds" and security measures. For example, pacification programs in classical counterinsurgency demand the ability to coordinate information operations, development, governance, military and police security operations, and overt and covert counterterrorism operations across a geographical area—often a province or region. At the national level, control of all counterinsurgent actions (political, military, social, and economic) in the hands of a single "Supremo" is recognized as a key element.⁴⁶

This *can* be achieved in one country: Malaysia, Northern Ireland, and other campaigns demonstrated this. But to achieve this level of integration requires excellent governmental stability, unity, and restraint. Moreover, it demands extremely close coordination and integration between and within police, intelligence, military, development, aid, information, and administrative agencies. For example, the successful Malaysian campaign rested on an overall Supremo with combined military, political, and

administrative powers, supported by an intricate system of federal, state, district, and subdistrict executive interagency committees. Likewise, successful classical counterinsurgency in the Americas, Africa, and Asia has been closely tied to improvements in governance, integrated administrative systems, and joint interagency action.

At the global level, no world government exists with the power to integrate the actions of independent nations to the extremely close degree required by traditional counterinsurgency theory, nor can regional counterinsurgency programs be closely enough aligned to block all insurgent maneuver. This is particularly true when the enemy—as in this case—is not a Maoist-style mass rural movement but a largely urban-based insurgency operating in small cells and teams with an extremely low tactical signature in the urban clutter of globalized societies. In today's international system, a unified global approach—even only in those areas directly affected by Al Qaeda-sponsored jihad—would be intensely problematic. It would demand cooperation far beyond anything yet achieved between diverse states.

Robert Kagan has argued that the current "crisis of legitimacy" affecting U.S. efforts to exercise global leadership in the "War on Terrorism" is a symptom rather than a cause of a deepening geostrategic division between Europe and America.⁴⁷ While this division persists, under the international system as currently constituted, any nation powerful enough to act as a global counterinsurgency Supremo would tend to lack legitimacy. Conversely, any collective or multinational grouping (such as the UN Security Council) that could muster unquestioned legitimacy would tend to lack sufficient power to act effectively against Islamist insurgents or their state sponsors. It would be fatally constrained by the very factors (sovereign equality of states, nonintervention in the internal affairs of states, multilateral consensus) that generated its legitimacy. Thus, the entire concept of counterinsurgency—in its classical form, with a single Supremo coordinating actions—is highly problematic when applied at the global level.

Similarly, classical counterinsurgency seeks to deny enemy sanctuaries, prevent infiltration into the area where the conflict is occurring, and isolate insurgents from support. A global insurgency has limited vulnerability to many of these measures, because of the phenomenon of failed and failing states and ungoverned, undergoverned, or poorly governed areas between states (such as the tribal areas on the Pakistan-Afghan border described above). This allows geographical sanctuary for insurgents,

while international flows of information and finances provide "cybersanctuaries" (like the Al Qa'eda Internet presence described above) where insurgents can operate.

So a globalized insurgency demands a rethink of traditional counterinsurgency. What is required is counterinsurgency redux, not the templated application of 1960s techniques. Both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency provide some answers, but an integrated approach is needed that draws on both disciplines, modifies them for current conditions, and develops new methods applicable to globalized insurgency.

The next section applies complexity theory to derive a model of how "counterinsurgency redux" might look.

PART 3: A SYSTEMS MODEL OF INSURGENCY

This political force... has an elaborate and far-flung apparatus... an apparatus of amazing flexibility and versatility, managed by people whose experience and skill in underground methods are presumably without parallel in history.

—George Kennan, "Long Telegram" (1946)

The previous section argued that global insurgency renders the traditional counterterrorism paradigm largely irrelevant, and that it has strained the classical counterinsurgency paradigm, which is ill suited to countering a globalized insurgency. This section reappraises counterinsurgency through the emerging science of complexity.

Systems Thinking

The modern understanding of war is underpinned by systems thinking. This has been increasingly influential since the 1920s, when the Soviet theorist Mikhail Tukhachevskii proposed the theory of "deep operations" (*glubokaia operatsiia*), which viewed friendly and enemy forces as competing systems and sought to dislocate the enemy at the systemic level.⁴⁸ Indeed, familiar concepts like Blitzkrieg, strategic bombing, air-land battle, maneuver warfare, and effects-based operations are all systems approaches to warfare.

Classical counterinsurgency is also based on a systems approach. It seeks to identify key processes in an insurgent system and coordinate countermeasures at the systemic level. The most sophisticated example of classical counterinsurgency, under U.S. secretary of defense Robert S. McNamara during the Vietnam War, used highly developed quantitative, statistical