

Motivational Parameters in Islamic Terrorism

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Preface

This working paper represents work-in-progress. It is neither exhaustive nor complete, but is the result of mutual inspiration. During the spring of 2002 the author had the pleasure of lecturing a dedicated and curious group of anthropological students at the University of Aarhus. The lengthy discussions that evolved emphasized one topic within the fundamentalism debate in particular. This was the woefully inadequate interpretation of Islamic fundamentalism as a solely religious phenomenon.

As a result of this inadequacy we set out to present our perspective and the present working paper is the result of our joint efforts. Six students volunteered to work as research assistants, and their dedication to the assigned tasks was exemplary.

For the first chapter Line Rostrup Henningsen and Maj Nygaard-Christensen were responsible for conducting research into Islam as a motivating parameter in Islamic terrorism. Lars Hallundbæk and Astrid Paldam looked into social identity in order to enhance the multi-causal perspective. And finally Jette Howalt and Anne Harrits probed the anti-western sentiments as a source for insight into the minds of the terrorists.

The learning process of writing a working paper with enthusiastic students was to our mutual benefit. We strove, and succeeded, in creating an atmosphere in which an original concept could be presented without bias. For this experience I am very grateful.

Introduction

The events of September 11, 2001, have renewed interest of, in particular, decision makers, the media, academics, and the public in the field of fundamentalist studies. The academic world has faced pressure to provide an explanation of this exceptionally violent form of Islamic fundamentalism. Why do people commit mass murder in the name of Islam and sacrifice themselves in the process? Why do they hate the West to this extent, and are these actions inherent characteristics of Islam? The prevalent, and thus most popular, interpretation focuses on the religious cloaking of the terrorists. They are most often labelled religious fanatics.

This religious explanation is quite good. It allows us to analyze and judge terrorism from a singular point of entry, which is Islam. The general idea is that by scrutinizing the inner workings and ambiguities of a major religion, the motivation for violent actions and thought patterns will be obvious. All is well, then, except for one aspect. The religious model does not stand up to comparison with empirical evidence. Very few of the personal histories of the known hijackers, suicide bombers and terrorist masterminds display a personal history of religious zealotry; they appear strikingly secular in their ideology and actions.

Rather than illuminating the reasoning behind terrorism in the name of Jihad, the picture that emerges simplifies the phenomenon to such an extent that it eventually becomes erroneous and misleading. What is needed is a model of explanation for this particular type of violent behavior justified in religious terms that takes other parameters into account. By using an anthropological approach the author does not discard the concept of Islam as a motivational factor. But the intricacies of radical fundamentalist reasoning, justification and rationalization imply that a multicausal model provides a more thorough insight into this current phenomenon. The reality is complex, and so is the model needed for identifying the motivational parameters affecting Islamic terrorism. While it is possible to list a number of motivational factors, it is quite another matter to sort them according to importance. For the individual holy warrior all of these parameters may have influenced his decision to join the Jihad, some perhaps more than others. Ranking is of lesser importance than understanding the interplay of individual reasoning, societal pressure, and perceived threats to religion and culture.

The various motivational parameters presented in this working paper most often operate in unison. I have chosen to present these parameters individually, but am acutely aware that this is an analytical endeavor. In reality these parameters cannot be separated in the mind of the individual terrorist: all of these may apply to his particular disposition or a single parameter may be emphasized for individual reasons.

The motivational parameters presented here are not listed in any particular order. There is no such thing as a hierarchical order in which these parameters can be placed. Instead they are simply examples of reasons why someone

might sign up for holy war in the name of Allah, and in some extreme cases choose to sacrifice his life. A brief historical introduction places the current trends in perspective, which allows us to interpret the newfound optimism among militant Islamists. The first parameter discussed is that of Islam itself. How does religion motivate people to engage in terrorism and what is the symbolic vocabulary invoked to legitimize violent actions? The second parameter concerns aspects of social identity. Militant Islamism is perceived as a modern phenomenon, inasmuch as the reality and patterns of reasoning utilized were certainly elements unknown in traditional Muslim societies. Have the anchors for societal self-identification been weighed, with hitherto unknown consequences for the construction of meaning for the individual? The third parameter looks at the anti-Western sentiments as grounds for terrorism. What are the actual accusations leveled at the West, and how is the order of the world perceived among the terrorists? Finally, the conclusion briefly sums up the various motivational parameters for terrorist action and explains why a monocausal interpretation is inadequate.

It should be emphasized that this paper deals exclusively with the militant branch of Islamic fundamentalism. The motivational parameters described in the following pages appear only to attract a small segment of Muslims. It cannot be used as a formula for description of the worldwide Muslim community. It is a matter of fact that the louder the militant fundamentalists claim to represent the only correct interpretation of the divine message, the further they remove themselves from mainstream Muslim society. The desperate need to explain the only Truth through violent actions testifies to the controversy surrounding this revelation, not only in the Western world but more importantly in the worldwide Islamic community.

Historical Introduction

This working paper deals specifically with the trends of the current form of Islamic terrorism. Violence and terrorism conducted in the name of Islam is not a novel phenomenon. Suffice it to say that a wide range of different movements and organizations have resorted to extreme actions in the history of Islam, as well as in other religions. This paper is not the framework for a thorough analysis of the use of violence in the name of Islam in a historical perspective. Its focus is the current forms of terrorism, whose roots are as complex as they are multicausal.

Looking at the last quarter of the twentieth century, a profusion of militant fundamentalist movements appeared in almost all countries with a significant Muslim population. These movements were separated spatially, temporally, ideologically, methodically, and most certainly religiously. Some were exclusively Shi'i movements, appealing to no other Muslim segment than the Shi'i version of Islam. Most were limited in scope and ideology and were concerned with Islamic justice only within a national context. What is important to notice is the absence of coherence and integrity between the movements. Although they all claimed to cleanse society from un-Islamic influences and correct the wrongs of current regimes, they never managed to agree among themselves. A striking example is the deep mistrust between the Islamic republic of Iran and the Taliban regime of Afghanistan during the late 1990s. Both entities are examples of popular fundamentalist movements gaining power. Yet any resemblance ends here, as mutual accusations of heresy flourished until the abrupt departure of the Taliban from the regional scene. Their respective visions of the ideal Islamic society had very little in common besides references to the Quran. Nevertheless, their absolute conviction in their own version of the true path to enlightenment caused them to support militant Islamic movements abroad. Cooperation between these movements did exist, but is only noteworthy for its distinct lack of success. The emergence of an Islamic internationale only appeared around 1991 with the re-activation of an organization called the Al-Qaeda. It had been created in the last phase of the Afghan war to assist Muslims worldwide in their struggle for sovereignty, independence, or justice. Al-Qaeda is a novel and unique organizational model in the history of Islamic terrorism. Rather than being a centralized and hierarchical organization it is more of a loose federation of individual terror organizations. Al-Qaeda represents the only successful fusion of the various branches of Islam into a single movement. How was this possible? Rather ironically this newfound unity and cohesion was based upon political aspirations while deliberately downplaying religious discordance.

September 11, 2001, changed the perspective for good. From treating these militant movements as a fringe phenomenon, an anomaly in the modern world, they entered center stage in our perception of the world. They declared war on the West years ago and even had the courtesy to present their declaration in writing. A

fascinating glimpse into the world according to Osama bin Laden was available in 1996, through his Declaration of War, in which harsh political analysis is fused with religious legitimization for action, i.e., violent action. As distorted and ridiculous as it may appear, it serves as an alternative guide for interpreting the state of the world for the confused and oppressed. It seems safe to assume that the West has methodically and systematically downplayed and misinterpreted the signals from the Islamist camp. Since Islam appears to be the focal point for the fundamentalists, let us first turn to their perspectives on Islam as a source of motivational inspiration.

The Religious Parameter

Islamic fundamentalists who resort to violence are not representative of Islam. They are by any definition a minority, although they claim to be the rightful interpreters of the divine message that is Islam. The extensive use of references to the Quran includes radical and novel interpretations of the important concepts of Umma and Jihad. These concepts are shared across sectarian and cultural borders in the Islamic world. This paper does not deal with any particular branch of modern Islam, whether Sunni or Shi'a, but rather with the radical interpretation of Islam, a phenomenon which is trans-Islamic in nature.

The Islamic fundamentalists legitimate their violent actions by invoking the holy tradition as well as the history of interpretation of the holy scriptures. Islam is invoked for a variety of different legitimating purposes. This is done with reference to a divine authority, and in this way action is presented as more than merely a human convention. Since Allah is not available for specific guidance and questioning, mediators have the task of interpreting His will. This function has historically been the domain of the clergy. Islam can be used to justify the way things should be done, but it also points out the norms of appropriate and desirable future action. Any religion contains the potential for legitimating violence when it is being applied to current problems.

The following passages will show how Islamic fundamentalists do this through their extensive use of Quranic references, especially the concepts of Umma and Jihad.

The scriptural sources and their interpretation

The Islamic fundamentalists legitimate violent actions and objectives by constantly citing passages from the Quran in their rhetorical statements. In this way their actions are seen as more than just a human convention; their actions become the will of Allah, and individual responsibility is passed onwards. Only Allah knows, and he will be the sole judge of human conduct. Thus, manmade law is circumvented and in this way becomes obsolete. However, the fundamentalists also invoke certain precedents from the history of interpretation, through which they legitimate their use of specific Islamic concepts, and in this way rely on a scholarly and very human tradition.

From a Muslim perspective, the Quran contains the revelation presented by Allah to the prophet Muhammad. The authority of the Quran as the word of God has been and still is the reference point for Muslims in conjunction with the Sira and the Hadith. The biography of the prophet Muhammad provides a contextual framework for the revelation of the Quran. In addition, it is the source of the Sunna, which is the normative example set by the prophet. The Sunna is second in importance after the Quran because of the importance attributed to Muhammad in the interpretation of Islam.

Ijtihad means interpretation; it is related to these main scriptural sources in Islam and has traditionally rested with religious scholars, the Ulema. The Ulema have been granted authority of interpretation because of the sophistication of the texts. As Islam emerged as a major religion it was the Ulema who performed Ijtihad, and the Muslim community consulted the scholars for guidance rather than individually interpreting the scriptures. Today this relationship is gradually changing, as there is less of a tendency to focus on traditional religious interpretational authority. There is a less rigid understanding of who actually can perform Ijtihad. This fact may appear trivial, but it has important consequences when Islam is fused with current politics. This development has resulted in neo-Ijtihad, leaving the door open for the individual Muslims to interpret the meaning of the sources. The fundamentalists reject the authority of traditional Ijtihad because they claim that their desire is to return to a purer form of Islam. They never question the authority or significance of the Quran or the Sunna, but demand a right to perform Ijtihad. This enables the fundamentalists to carry out a political rereading of the scriptures, and because few modern fundamentalist leaders possess the traditionally acknowledged credentials for performing Ijtihad, their interpretation is radically different from that of the traditional Ulema. The fundamentalists usually resort to a selective reading of the Quran, looking for specific passages to support their previously established worldview. Above all, their reading is political, and the result is that Quranic terminology is inserted into a modern political context. They do not look for statements on tolerance, coexistence with other religions, or forgiveness that would be contradictory to their political project. What they want is change, and they are very impatient. So any statement that can be interpreted to support immediate action is included in their rhetoric. But the change that the fundamentalists claim is badly needed is of a dual nature: it is both spiritual and material — the cleansing of society of un-Islamic influences as well as a major political overhaul with extensive reference to the necessity of social justice.

The fundamentalist use of the scriptural sources

The fundamentalist movements extensively quote from the Quran in their publications in order to support their statements advocating radical change. More often than not, these quotations are removed from their original context and thus their meanings are transformed. Whether this is done out of sheer ignorance of the scriptural sources or it is deliberate is difficult to ascertain. The important issue is that the quotations acquire a new meaning that suits the current context. In fundamentalist use these quotations serve a legitimating function, the point being for them to underline the legitimacy of their ideology through scriptural religious authority.

Even though the fundamentalists reject earlier interpretations they curiously invoke the history of interpretation to support their own version. This is done by revitalizing often marginal and disparate interpretations of the past, but only

those that support their radical views and actions. This process of revitalization represents a selective reinterpretation of the history of interpretation, which simultaneously *carries on and disrupts/are both continuous and discontinuous with previously established procedures.

It is quite clear that the fundamentalists seek to return to a glorious past; that is the stated goal. However, the very insistence on the definition of what is traditional and authentic is born out of context. In their attempt to defend tradition they inevitably reconstruct it and infuse it with a political significance it did not formerly have. This reworking of tradition does not represent a return to pure Islamic sources. The fact that fundamentalists constantly feel compelled to emphasize their understanding of Islam illustrates the controversial nature of their interpretation.

Umma

The concept of Umma has two main functions in fundamentalist Islam. Firstly, the creation of an all-embracing Islamic Umma is seen as the realization of Allah's plan. Secondly, it can be used as a motivational factor in uniting and bonding people in movements and organizations, and in this way becomes a powerful social tool for fundamentalist ideology. Umma pertains to the worldwide community of all Muslims, regardless of sectarian disposition, and is unique in its capacity to embrace all believers.

Sharia

The ultimate goal for the Umma, as a religious community, is to implement religious law. This law is the Sharia, which is based on four Islamic sources: the Quran, the Sunna, the consensus of the Muslim community, and the scholars and Qiyas, or analogies. The last source implies that solutions to current problems should be sought in similar precedent cases. Thus, the way towards the right answer is considerably influenced by early scriptural sources. The Sharia represents the basis of an ideal society, since this society is to be ruled by divine law and rules regarding religious and moral behavior. It is the basis for a just social, moral, and religious order. The Sharia is an important concept for the fundamentalists, who seek to establish a Muslim society governed by divine law instead of secular ones, which are being rejected as they are claimed to be of no relevance to the Umma as a religious community.

Jahiliyya

The ideal Islamic state is governed by the Sharia. The most common critique used by the fundamentalists is leveled at the governments of the Muslim world. They are accused of unjust rule, and worse still, of being illegitimate governments. Jahiliyya refers to the idea of pre-Islamic societies ignorant of Islam. It is a distinct historical period in the history of Islam and embraces the period before the revelation of the

Quran. However, for fundamentalists Jahiliyya often serves to describe a state of ignorance of Allah, rather than a specific historical period. But the meaning is the same, as it divides the world into societies ruled by the Sharia and those ruled by man-made law.

Not only is Jahiliyya the exact opposite of the ideal Islamic society, it also represents a direct threat to the moral and religious order. In fundamentalist understanding it is a threat to the Umma. Thus, societies defined as part of the Jahiliyya sphere are seen in a much more negative way. Instead of shrugging at the infidels, they are portrayed as a dangerous enemy, and the division between Islamic and non-Islamic societies is deliberately widened. In this way the relationship between the Islamic world and the rest has been changed from an emphasis of differences to a radical contrast between good and evil. Peaceful coexistence between different devotions becomes almost impossible in this fundamentalist division. This development is an expression of a radicalized dualism, and once this interpretation has been accepted as the true version, the world becomes much easier to interpret for the individual Muslim. Either it is Islamic, in the fundamentalist version, or it is evil. The perception of a divided world is a common feature in the rhetorical statements of the fundamentalists, and this vision is the starting point of societal restructuring.

The use of Umma as the ideal of the past and as a political tool

The fundamentalist movements use the concept of Umma in two ways. As the expression of the ideal society worth striving for, but also as a political tool uniting Muslims in the struggle to realize this goal. Both of these ideas are found in fundamentalist rhetoric, directly and indirectly. The ultimate goal of the fundamentalists is the formation of an ideal society, with the participation of the Umma, as the realization of Allah's plan for mankind. The participation in this elaborate plan becomes a duty for the individual Muslim. The society they try to recreate is an undivided Muslim community as a single religio-political entity. The harmony envisioned between the different denominations and social classes truly requires faith, and in order to explain these very real differences the divisions are blamed either on outsiders or illegitimate governments. This ideal society is opposed to all non-Islamic societies, including Muslim societies governed by secular laws. These illegitimate governments represent a threat to the ideal Umma, and the only way to attain freedom for the community as well for the individual is to establish a pure Umma based on the Sharia.

The Islamic world of today is fragmented into many different nations and sectarian branches. As a reaction to this development the fundamentalists use the concept of Umma as a political tool for uniting Muslims who rightly see a divided Islamic world. The glory of the past, where Muslim armies conquered the world and Muslim art and science flourished, is invoked to make the utopian ideal appear more real and closer than it really is.

The idea of a close-knit and morally just Umma appeals to a lot of Muslims, albeit for different reasons. The unemployed, the disillusioned, the dreamers, and the uprooted find solace in the sermons and discussions by fundamentalist leaders. Heaven has descended on earth, at least in the fundamentalist circles where the standards of the ideal society are being practiced. Curiously, the fundamentalists have partly succeeded in creating a new societal sphere, as those who follow their interpretations perceive themselves to be part of a much larger undertaking. And they are willing to make personal sacrifices. Some of them are quite impatient for change and choose a quick, violent path toward changing society. In the fundamentalist movements, Islam forms the basis for uniting different types of people by referring to a common bond and destination for all Muslims. Islam is the lowest common denominator for these people, but as a social and spiritual glue it performs quite well.

Jihad

Jihad is a complex concept, to say the least. In popular interpretations, both Muslim and otherwise, it is often translated as the duty to engage in holy war against infidels with no holds barred. This has nothing to do with the original concept of Jihad as described in the Quran. Jihad derives from the verb jahada, meaning to exert, struggle or strive. The basic form of Jihad is an endeavor toward a praiseworthy aim. Not exactly a specific order to slaughter infidels, it is nevertheless embodied with a moral dimension, although subtle. But fundamentalists have no time for subtleties. Jihad has different connotations in different contexts. It refers to an external struggle against the enemies of Islam as well as an internal struggle to purify oneself spiritually. These dimensions are not equal to one another. The individual struggle is called the greater Jihad, and the external one the lesser Jihad. Islam begins with personal devotion, and not violent political change. The more militant of the fundamentalists interpret Jihad with slight regard for the words of the Quran, and certainly with absolute disregard for the traditional moral interpretation. Referring to the external struggle against the enemies of Islam, Jihad has been used historically to legitimate violence in times of conquest, communal self-defense, and religious zealotry. In a more current context, both Western media and fundamentalists refer to acts of terrorism as Jihad. It is interpreted as a duty to defend and implement the ideal society of the fundamentalists. The concept of Jihad is used to motivate and to legitimate acts of political violence.

The fundamentalist interpretation of Jihad

The more radical fundamentalists revitalize some of the historical understandings of Jihad. Some of those individuals who go all the way in their endeavor to change the order of things become terrorists. They are terrorists by any standard, and, most importantly, also in the opinion of the vast majority of Muslims. The terrorists

perceive Jihad as the means to establish the pure Umma. It is not an option, but an obligation. The fulfillment of this obligation is what matters, not the immediate result. The terrorist answers to Allah alone and he will be the judge. Individual responsibility is transferred to divine authority, and this effectively displaces the individual from society. Once this metamorphosis is accomplished the sky is the limit, literally, as could be witnessed on September 11, 2001. As the threshold between common human compassion and ruthless behavior is crossed the license to kill becomes a badge of merit. Secular laws cease to have meaning. The absolute defiance of the law has been expressed quite often in Egyptian courts, where accused fundamentalist terrorists on trial engage in shouting matches with the judge, refusing to recognize his authority.

This obligation is elevated above other moral standards, which may be abrogated because Jihad is serving the will of Allah. The fundamentalist movements use the concept of Jihad predominantly as a pretext for fighting against the enemies of Islam. These enemies are labeled infidels, imperialists, and bad Muslims. This action represents a drastic simplification of the concept of Jihad. However, these movements reflect the idea of the personal Jihad in their behavior within their respective environments. In the Jihad against non-Muslims attention is mainly directed at the U.S., which is accused of exploiting and oppressing Muslims. Other Muslims become legitimate targets for violence because they have transgressed Islamic precepts; heretics are sought and found wherever there is opposition to the fundamentalist cause. There are no grey areas.

Jihad is described as defensive by the fundamentalist movements. If the fundamentalists were not there to protect the interests of the Umma, it would be left defenseless to the schemes of the non-Islamic world.

Martyrdom

Another concept often connected to Jihad is martyrdom. In the Quran this concept refers to a wide range of actions, all which are related to death through a number of circumstances, which will bring one the status of martyr. Martyrdom is an important motivational factor, leading individual fundamentalists to take serious risks or seek deliberate self-destruction. The martyr is guaranteed a place in paradise, and the rewards are clearly spelled out in the scriptures. No pain will be felt at the moment of death. The martyr skips the interrogation by the two angels in the grave, and is immediately forwarded to the highest station in paradise. Once there, he will receive extensive rewards — for instance, seventy beautiful virgins. While some skeptics may suspect that these rewards are more of a figurative nature, some Palestinian suicide bombers have been known to protect their most private parts from the effects of the explosion. The vision of paradise is very real to at least some of the most radical elements within this community. Apart from the heavenly rewards in the hereafter, the martyr lives on in the memory of the community, with which he

provides grace and purity. Furthermore, the family of the deceased is often granted respect by the community. This graceful exit from this world into the next allows a frustrated and alienated individual to rise above the crowd as a true believer and a protector of the community.

The Social Parameter

Religion is an important aspect of social life in contemporary Muslim societies. Religious beliefs and values motivate human action, and fundamentalist movements organize their collective religious expressions according to the target audience, which is often within the movement. This paper certainly does not try to diminish the motivational effects of Islam in legitimating political violence. It is, and will continue to be, a very significant parameter; but as the previous chapter illustrated, the traditional interpretation of right and wrong in Islam is being challenged.

Though at times it can be difficult to fathom, even the worst of the fundamentalist terrorists are human. Their ruthless and outrageous behavior cannot be written off in clinical terms; these people are not mentally ill and would pass a psychological evaluation. Too often they have been labeled far too fast for comfort. The truth of the matter is as straightforward as it is depressing. We are not dealing with an isolated, miniscule group of politically agitated madmen; they are social beings like everybody else, and perhaps more so. This anti-social behavior coupled with a black-and-white division of the world does not appear very social at first glance. But as this chapter will try to explain, the needs of the individual fundamentalist are closely linked to a desire to form social bonds. When fundamentalist activists refer to each other as brothers, there is a truism in this deliberately chosen vocabulary. The movement often takes precedence over family ties, sometimes influencing individual members to blow themselves up as a symbol of dedication to the cause, but certainly also to his chosen brothers.

If Islam was as uncompromising and violently inclined as the fundamentalists argue, then why has this phenomenon only existed during the last quarter of the twentieth century? Surely there must have been a constant and vicious confrontation between the world of Islam and the rest of the world. Except for a few outbursts of violence, most linked to anti-colonialism over the centuries, neither history nor statistics lend credence to fundamentalist interpretation. Briefly stated, the radical dualism is a recent phenomenon with minor connections to historical events. This is not a trivial point, but a crucial element in comprehending why fundamentalism is not only about religious issues. Something else must be at stake.

There is no monocausal interpretation of Islamic fundamentalism. In pursuing this argument it is beneficial to examine the interrelated process of modernity, oppression, loss of existential meaning, and social identity. The focus is on social identity, not ethnic, which appears to have little significance in the endeavor to establish the true Umma.

Rapid social change and urbanization are effects of the process of modernization, and this development has had a profound impact on traditional Muslim societies. Social networks and family patterns have been uprooted and transferred into a new environment. For some this change of habitat has meant the loss of a traditional network of support, and coupled with high unemployment rates,

the contemporary Muslim world is left with little possibility of absorbing these newcomers into a social sphere. The needs and desires of these people are often impossible to attain, leaving many alienated and disillusioned about the benefits of modern society. They are not part of the progress they are witnessing, but are left sidetracked and superfluous. Instead of being players, and gradually advancing towards material gain and meaningful relations, they are reduced to spectators with no control over their own destiny.

Furthermore, the perceived, and often very real, oppression carried out by the respective governments contributes to the loss of existential meaning for the individual. The Muslim notion of the concept of honor and shame makes this situation hard to bear. Perceiving oneself as a failure is very much like a stain on personal honor, one that does not rub off easily. The correlation between the consequences of modernity and the real or imagined oppression creates a void, a social space in which the desire to change unfortunate circumstances leads to action, sometimes violent. Fundamentalism represents an important tie between the individual and a larger social group, and although this group is a construction it becomes very real for those personally involved. Seemingly incomprehensible acts of terrorism, and in particular the issue of martyrdom, become the ultimate manifestation of meaning and identity.

Lost and found

A characteristic of modern society that sets it apart from traditional society is the nature of identity formation. In traditional society, such as rural and tribal populations in the Muslim world, identity is ascribed rather than acquired. Relationships between members of the family and outsiders are defined from the moment of birth according to rigid rules. No one is unsure of where the boundaries are, which is not the same as total obedience; rule breakers are part of every societal group. The standards of behavior appear rigid from a modern perspective, but they serve the purpose of presenting the individual with an identity as a member of a family and tribe.

Moving from a rural to an urban environment entails more than just a change of location; it also involves a change of lifestyle and social order. The extended family is not ever present to assist with immediate problems. Solidarity is not necessarily granted from neighbors or colleagues, who have no stake in the future of others. One is not awarded a job just because of a family bond any more; it becomes a right that has to be earned through education, for instance. Social identity in the urban environment ceases to be a given, but is dependent on new relationships and personal networks.

The few ascribed identity traits such as race, nationality, and ethnic affiliation do not disappear in modern society, rather they diminish in importance. At times these traits are revived to serve the purpose of forging new alliances. Islamic fundamentalism is very much part of modernity. It can even be argued that it would

not exist without this environment in which rationalization can be extended into religious spheres. As mentioned above, the imaginative forms of interpretation applied to the scriptures are only possible in a modern context.

The search for meaning and identity is part of the reflectivity of modernity. Reflecting on one's situation and surroundings is central to the concept of modernity. Ascribed identity is a thing of the past because modern identity is constantly being constructed and is dynamic. When armed Jihad against foreign infidels becomes an *obligation*, it is without precedent in recent Muslim history. Perceiving Jihad in this way requires autonomy of interpretation from the established schools of Islamic jurisprudence. It is interesting to note that the rise of fundamentalism has partly eroded some of the traditional authority of the Ulema. Their interpretational monopoly has been broken, and often by laymen who would do anything to protect tradition. Whose tradition? one may ask. What is the true message of Islam? Is it resignation towards the current order of things or is it an unconditional and never-ending crusade to convert mankind? This debate, which takes place on a daily basis in the Muslim world, is itself a modern phenomenon.

From this perspective even the Taliban movement of Afghanistan is a modern construction. The just recently unveiled women of this hard-trying nation would find it hard to recognize anything modern in the rule of the religious students. But the fact that women were banned from public life, sports and entertainment — these were actually punishable actions — has absolutely no precedence in Islamic history. The intrusion into the private sphere of social life was unprecedented, and was condemned by Muslims worldwide for its transgression of the true Muslim spirit. These interpretations of the Sharia were new to the ordinary Afghan; it was never a return to the past. What used to be part of traditional Afghan society was the tolerance extended towards other sectarian branches, which coexisted side by side. The Taliban experiment was an eye opener for the world. For the first time a fundamentalist movement took power and installed a regime so repressive it was ultimately condemned by all other Muslim nations. The Taliban vision of ideal society was based on ignorance of the written words of the Holy Scriptures and certainly void of any compassionate moral interpretation. In effect, the Taliban warriors had removed themselves utterly from Islam. This process was only possible through a thought process influenced by modernity; there was nothing traditional about their ideology. The Taliban represents a modern reflective project and is an example of how Islamic fundamentalist militants construct their own identity. Islam became the tool to secure some sort of legitimacy for the Taliban era, but primarily it served as a platform for the oppressed and disillusioned who constructed their own identity as the saviors of Afghanistan. Their project was not to save Afghanistan, but themselves.

Modernization and urbanization

Socioeconomic factors also influenced the emergence of fundamentalist ideology. Some observers perceive modernization to be the most important reason why Muslims join fundamentalist movements. Although this is a simplification of a complex issue, modernization does exert considerable influence. The twentieth century brought changes to the Muslim world which it is still struggling to come to terms with. Unfortunately, the negative aspects of this development are the most cited and among other things include high unemployment rates, marginalization, and societal divisions. Being severed from traditional social networks of support in the rural areas, and perhaps exposed to poverty or conflict while struggling to lead a decent life in overpopulated cities with an indifferent government gives rise to resentment. Some individuals eventually feel alienated after long periods of dramatic social change in which they have no access to the spoils. These events seriously challenge the existing structure of meaning on both an individual and a societal level.

Studies have indicated that fundamentalists appear to be from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. For empirical evidence it is useful to look at Egypt and Lebanon, as both countries have experienced a surge in violently inclined fundamentalism. The primary recruiting ground in Egypt during the last two decades has been the urban environment. Young males in their twenties from the lower or middle classes, quite a few with a university degree in a technical or medical field, have been drawn to the fundamentalist ideology. Why would these seemingly educated and modernized individuals risk persecution by the government for the cause? The answer is as simple as it is a depressing social fact. Egypt cannot absorb this group into society, as there are no jobs nor any prospect of a job or a future based on individual merit and skill. Their expectations are not met in the encounter with Egyptian socioeconomic realities. They are denied the status that should come with a degree in engineering. Many of these fundamentalists also complain about the social collapse that is a result of the urbanization of Egyptian society. The absence of a personal network has resulted in disillusion with the order of the current process of development. This disillusionment is further exacerbated by the fact that they have little or no political influence. The ability to change their situation through existing channels is marginal, so democracy is not an option. The fundamentalist movements provide an alternative to the existing social order, one that is based on a vision of the free and capable individual. The movements provide a strong and real sense of brotherhood among members, but perhaps most significantly, they offer a new social identity. In this way the individual is transformed from an alienated and frustrated citizen of modern society into a devout and respected member of the true Muslim community. In this environment the ideals are practiced internally, as a showcase of what is right and as a spiritual anchor.

Most of the original members of the Hezbollah movement of Lebanon in the early 1980s joined for identical reasons. Although the demographic composition

differed from their Egyptian counterpart, Hezbollah was almost exclusively Shi'a Muslim. And it was the Shi'is who mobilized themselves in order to change their status as the despised and ignorant class of Lebanese society. The Shi'is were historically the poorest segment of the population and did not participate in the progressive period of the 1960s and 1970s. Their political influence guaranteed by the constitution was null and void in the environment of realpolitik, which was the order of the day before the civil war. The sense of oppression felt by the Shi'is was very real, and Hezbollah appeared at the right moment with the right message. Guided by charismatic spiritual leaders, whose message can be summed up as urging self-reliance for the Shii community, Hezbollah rapidly gained followers. Both for reasons of political survival as well as for the benefits of the Hezbollah structure, which includes schools, health clinics, cooperatives, and so on. Hezbollah was from the outset infused with a clear understanding of the legitimate use of violence to protect Muslims. The militia fought with bravery during the civil war, and the best of the fighters were transferred to terrorist groups. In the name of Jihad, the Shi'i community gradually came to accept suicide bombings and abductions. Doubting the moral dimension of suicide actions they nevertheless tacitly acknowledged the effect of these operations

Modernization certainly plays a role in the emergence of violently inclined fundamentalist movements. But this parameter does *not fit all movements, and more specifically not all terrorists. The Taliban movement clearly does not fit into this pattern. Its members are usually young men or boys recruited in religious schools or refugee camps in Pakistan. They display little or no knowledge of the history or social realities of their country of origin — to them Afghanistan might as well be another planet — and they have literally returned as foreigners. By now a picture is emerging of the disillusioned and superfluous merging in movements where religion is the glue that binds them.

Honor and shame

Another significant reason to join a fundamentalist movement lies in the praised notions of honor and shame. While this dualism exists in all societies, it is more central to self-identification in the Muslim world than elsewhere. The concept of honor is reflected in individual, societal, and global relations, and all three can compel an individual to act if he feels his honor is being affected negatively. The previously mentioned effects of modernization can be damaging to individual pride, and one way to restore personal dignity is to act spiritually correct in a fundamentalist environment. Here the shame of not making it is transformed into meaningful action for the benefit of all Muslims. In this way the individual hopes to improve his status in the community as one who actively works to correct the wrongs of society.

The sense of honor is also at stake in international relations. This is most evident in the strong support and sympathy for the Palestinian cause, and the anti-

Israeli stance is a staple rhetorical element of fundamentalist statements. The Israeli occupation of Palestine induces a sense of shame. Infidels controlling the Holy Land are an unacceptable situation, especially when repeatedly followed up by military defeats. The inability of the Umma to rid itself of the Israeli presence in the heart of the Middle East is grounds for resentment. Support for Palestinian suicide operations is widespread, and they are interpreted as just means in a just fight for liberation. Accusations are leveled at Muslim governments for not being able to protect the right of the Palestinians, and it is easy to capitalize on popular sentiments when action is taken against Israel.

The attempt to restore personal honor is very important in Muslim self-perception, and honorable actions can take many forms. The tens of thousands of Muslims from all over the world who flocked to aid the Mujahedin of Afghanistan during the war against the Soviet Union were received as heroes upon their return. These volunteers were credited with defeating a superpower in the name of Jihad, although the Mujahedin did the majority of the fighting and dying. As a by-line it is interesting to note that these volunteers were resented because of their holier-than-thou attitude towards Afghans.

Oppression

Oppression is a fluid phenomenon, and its interpretation is related to the individual's perception of reality. For the sake of clarity, this paper does not attempt to define oppression, suffice it to say that the focus here is one individual interpretation. Oppression sadly comes in many forms in contemporary Muslim societies. The situation of the Palestinians needs no further elaboration. In this case the opponent lives next door and interferes in everyday life. The despair among the Palestinians has led so far to two uprisings against the Israelis. These intifadas are the response to harsh conditions from which no meaning or hope can be extracted. The Israeli presence has led to the closure of educational institutions, arrests, economic malaise, inadequate infrastructure, and the subordination to regulations passed under the pretext of national security. The latest intifada can be interpreted as more or less identical in spirit to the forming of the Hezbollah. The lesson learned is simple: when you want something done properly – do it yourself. In a positive sense the communities have responded to intolerable conditions and oppression, although the inclination towards political violence in the name of Jihad seems all too readily accepted.

Martyrdom and the state of anomie

If the concept of martyrdom is viewed from the perspective of the frustrated individual, it is not difficult to tie this notion of the honorable exit from this world to the next, to current social and political struggles. Turning to the nature of the psychological inclination to perceive a deliberate self-destructive act as a viable

option opens up the possibility of understanding the intensity of the martyr's dedication to his task. Some of the publications and statements made by fundamentalist terrorist movements are literally death worshipping. As is obvious from Osama bin Laden's "Declaration of War," death appears just as precious as life, as long as it is an honorable form of death. The frequent references to the obligation of Jihad make it clear from an anthropological perspective that this ideology attracts people who are coping with extraordinary circumstances in life.

The concept of *anomie* as defined by Durkheim refers to a situation without order. It defines circumstances in which a social group experiences a massive crisis in its existing social order and describes the inability of this society to provide order and exert normative regulations for social behavior for its individual members. Anomie has a shattering impact on the perceptions of the individual, inasmuch as what was previously taken for granted is open to questioning. From this situation emerge identity groups which capitalize on the pathological collapse of the meaning-bearing structures in the life of the individual. When the gap between the commonly acknowledged interpretations of the world widens to such a degree that reality ceases to be recognizable through the traditional perspective, a change is necessary. The inability to absorb or explain a crisis situation on a personal level requires a new model for interpreting fundamentalist reality. Oppression, poverty, alienation, and disillusionment are real problems facing Muslim society today. Islam is not the catalyst which challenges the existing order — or rather disorder. Islam becomes the vehicle that interprets these events in a new light; what was previously unfathomable is now infused with a divine message. Anomie in Muslim society is traced back to a backsliding of morals, unjust government, and foreign conspiracies in the fundamentalist vision. This logic, whatever its relation to reality, is very effective in reducing a complex situation of personal and societal despair to a matrix in which the world is analyzed in accordance with the Quran. This is complexity reduction par excellence – to succeed as a fundamentalist you really only need one book, the Quran. The answer to any question can be found here; further education is obsolete. Radical situations require radical interpretations. As the Quran does not mention a specific response to U.S. imperialism (it would be another 800 years after the first publication before America was discovered), ingenuity is needed to locate the right passages. Thus, the power of the right of interpretation is an important political tool. Islam should not be underestimated as a powerful medium capable of responding to a multi-dimensional crisis environment. However, religious revitalization almost always springs from a need for spiritual answers to real problems.

Through the previous statement it is possible to understand why Muslims turn to fundamentalism in times of crisis. But how do some Muslims find justification and necessity in terrorism when their ideology is based on the protection of Islamic ideals and moral values? This certainly appears to be a contradiction in terms – and it is.

First of all, in a state of anomie morality is being redefined. During this period of societal upheaval the basis for distinguishing between right and wrong is blurred, if not absent. The physical separation from family, friends, and networks makes individuals vulnerable to extreme ideology, and they may initially approach out of curiosity. On being offered true friendship and brotherhood it is easy to understand why some are attracted to the fundamentalist environment. It becomes an oasis in the middle of the desert. In a vicious and uncaring world the fundamentalist group is the place for solace and contemplation. Instead of mourning the state of the world, the path to salvation is clearly spelled out. The basis for a new identity is already present in the form of Islam. Religious observance is the cornerstone on which additional layers are placed. All Muslims are familiar with the terms of Umma and Jihad, but interpretation is founded on personal integrity, which is not present in a state of anomie. This is not to say that all fundamentalist terrorists are cunningly seduced by evil Mullahs. Quite a few readily embrace the violent inclination and are willing to participate. Some sign up for Jihad for the thrill of it. Terrorism has a special appeal to those marginalized in a personal or societal way. All personal systems of meaning gain effectiveness by the link to the community in which they are embedded; meaning and individual are intertwined. People identify themselves and their actions in a social order by means of the system of meaning-bearing structures. If the world of Islam is at war, then retaliation is legitimate. The process of legitimization becomes easier the more abstract the image of the enemy. Most fundamentalists have never been exposed to Western civilization, except for imported products and TV programs. The enemy is faceless and can be dehumanized for reasons of expediency.

The process of socialization into a group entails the setting of standards and limitations of thought and action. These dynamics have been extensively described in anthropological literature. Role models are identified and, not surprisingly, the martyr represents the very peak of admirable behavior. The willingness to sacrifice oneself is not a normal behavioral trait in any culture, rather is it formed through a process of guidance by charismatic leaders. Selection is important in terrorist motivation – being singled out for a martyrdom operation labels the activist as a true Muslim and utterly reliable. It is a badge of honor to be positioned at the vanguard of Jihad.

The terrorist cell provides a secure and fixed environment for marginalized individuals to articulate their claims, while at the same time generating and shaping a particular vision of the world. The fundamentalist terrorist is loyal to the movement to an extent that would make any human resource manager envious. The likeliness of death is rarely a worry; it comes with the job, which, by the way, is not a job but a lifestyle. These terrorists are volunteers and have chosen to affiliate themselves with a particular interest group which serves their needs. The lack of physical security in this business is the trade-off for spiritual salvation and social

acceptance. Being part of something considered noble heightens personal status, and the quest takes precedence over individual concerns.

The notion of suicide bombing is a Western invention. In fundamentalist terminology it is called self-chosen martyrdom, and the difference between these interpretations reflects the distance between the ideologies. This difference in vocabulary is not merely academic hair splitting, in that the first label defines the phenomenon as it is and the other embodies it with the idea of individual freedom to take charge of one's destiny. In the words of a Hamas martyr to be:

"- We will make our blood cheap for the sake of God [...] and in order that Hamas remains a torch lighting the roads of all the perplexed and all the tormented and oppressed."

Truly an eloquent insight into the mind of an individual who appears suspiciously perplexed, tormented and oppressed himself. Nevertheless, this statement testifies to the extent of the newfound identity and direction of this particular terrorist. The above manifestation enables the frustrated to choose their own destiny, which is a rare opportunity in contemporary Palestinian society. The freedom to commit suicide is a highly dubious rallying point from an outsider's perspective. The readiness to embrace this individual right is spreading like an epidemic through Palestinian society, with dire consequences for the reconstruction of civil society. If nothing else, it clearly illustrates the perception of the lack of viable political and social alternatives. Through self-sacrifice the terrorist enters center stage in society, a place he never would have been if he remained alive and insignificant. The eagerness to fill a personal void overshadows the right of others to live. Other people's lives are not important — they are expendable. It is difficult to imagine how it would be possible for a Muslim to remove himself further away from the moral principles of Islam. Fundamentalism has come full cycle and feeds on its own disasters as beacons for the future.

The Anti-Western Parameter

Fundamentalist terrorism has a troubled relationship with the original message of the Quran, a relationship closely connected to current events and conditions, and the frustrations they produce. More than a religious phenomenon, it is social in nature. But by adding another dimension to the understanding of terrorist motivation, this ideology also relates to political and cultural criticism. To further the understanding of this parameter it is useful to examine the anti-Western sentiments proclaimed by fundamentalists. The West, and the U.S. in particular, did not become the enemy by chance. The dislike, and often hatred, of the ways of the West certainly must be included in a description of the motivations of Islamic terrorism.

An excellent example is the protracted conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. From a fundamentalist perspective the unwavering and uncritical support of Israel by the West is an outrage. This support represents the pinnacle of hypocrisy, while legitimate Palestinian claims have been ignored. Violent actions perpetrated by both parties to the conflict are labelled as defensive military action or terrorism, and labeling involves judgement. Muslims in general are very skeptical of Israeli behavior towards the Palestinians, and some find this situation intolerable. They encourage or support the idea of armed insurrection against the Israeli aggressors, and at all costs. Through the fundamentalist lens, the Palestinian conflict is solid evidence of the state of war between Islam and the West. Though probably none of the militant activists are familiar with the academic concept of a clash between civilizations, they have taken to the idea with a vengeance. Their inspiration comes from everyday situations across the Muslim world, often picked randomly, and not scholarly sources. The Quran tells you what to be aware of, and current situations provide the proof of the war against the Muslim Umma. The purported master plan of the West, and especially the U.S., is to keep the Umma in a state of inferiority in political, military, economical or cultural terms.

Definition by contrast

The unwillingness to suffer indignity in silence creates a historical and social setting in which mobilization against the West flourishes. Fundamentalist movements capitalize on these already existing sentiments and have incorporated them in their own agendas and propaganda. Resistance to Western domination and aggression becomes a duty, and again the radical interpretation of Jihad justifies any action. Progress and liberation cannot be secured without a determined and violent response, and the true Muslim will realize the necessity of this response in time. Local governments in the affected countries have played into the hands of the Western powers, and have become marionettes of the U.S. The fundamentalist ideal is the situation where all Muslims will rise to the challenge as One, creating the true Umma.

We declare openly and loudly that we are an Umma which fears God only and is by no means ready to tolerate injustice, aggression and humiliation. America, its Atlantic Pact allies, and the Zionist entity in the holy land of Palestine, attacked us and continue to do so without respite. Their aim is to make us eat dust continually. This is why we are, more and more, in a state of permanent alert in order to repel aggression and defend our religion, our existence, our dignity. They invaded our country, destroyed our villages, slit the throats of our children, violated our sanctuaries and appointed masters over our people who committed the worst massacres against our umma. They do not cease to give support to these allies of Israel, and do not enable us to decide our future according to our own wishes

By portraying the intentions of the West, which is the obliteration of Islam and world domination, a situation of definition by contrast is set in motion. Fundamentalist terrorism makes the distinction very simple: either you are with us or you are part of the problem. While most Muslims loath the idea of being part of a fundamentalist movement, they can relate to the critique of Western influence. Group affiliation is based on both internal and external perceptions of identity, and in situations where Western political leaders use the term *crusade against terrorism*, the wording is taken literally. This rhetorical blunder may appear trivial, but it is perceived as proof of the sinister intentions of the West.

When the fundamentalist terrorist movements attempt to define the commonality that all Muslims share, they do so by contrasting Islamic values with Western ones. In this process of contrasting and comparing some aspects are deliberately understated while others are exaggerated. In this way the hatred of the West is rationalized through a comparison of values, and Western culture becomes the antithesis of Islam. Religion is advanced as the social fabric that ensures civil behavior and peace among Muslims. By portraying Islam as the lowest common denominator, the message states that only through the defeat of the West can the survival of Islam be secured.

That it is possible to defeat Western influence can be seen from the fundamentalist interpretation of the past twenty years. Chronologically, the success of the fundamentalist way starts with the revolution in Iran. The overthrowal of the Shah, perceived as a U.S. stooge, was an important victory for Muslim self-esteem. The Islamic revolution in Iran became a symbol for anti-Western Muslim movements, powerfully illustrating that it was possible to defeat the U.S. This curbing of American economic,

political, and cultural influence made it possible for the Iranians to create a society based on Islamic values, thereby rebuilding lost dignity. The vicious war in Afghanistan against the Soviets, who were also atheist invaders, took almost ten years to end. In the end a superpower was defeated through Muslim solidarity. The billions of dollars that poured into the Mujaheddin coffers from the U.S. are rarely mentioned. Terrorist actions against U.S. troops and embassies in Lebanon, Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania actually led to the withdrawal of troops and diminishing political influence. Other events contribute to this fundamentalist claim, which contains some degree of truth. September 11, 2001, was seen as the final proof of the progress of the fundamentalist cause. First of all it proved that the U.S. could be severely shaken, and second that a U.S.-led war against terrorism has a very shaky foundation indeed.

Politics wrapped in religion

These events have inspired fundamentalist movements to pursue their agenda, fully aware that the process will be long and hard. This political struggle can be coupled with the struggle within the movements. The clandestine nature of their work leads the individual members to perceive themselves as being persecuted. They may not live on the front line, as the Palestinians do every day, but their fight is just as real. For some this harsh reality is related to an inferior existence, compared to the standards of the Western world. Therefore, resisting the Western world is an extension of their personal resistance.

Democracy and universal human rights are also targets of fundamentalist ideology. Both are seen as attempts to incorporate Western values into Muslim societies. The fundamentalists do have a point when they stress that both concepts are usually applied arbitrarily. Accusations of hypocrisy are leveled at the West when it supports repressive regimes because it serves their purpose. Here the Sharia enters center stage again, because it is a universal code for human behavior given to mankind from Allah. As such it is superior to any man-made law.

Accusations against the West abound. They are political, economical, social, cultural, and even personal in nature. But one important point of critique is absent from the list: very rarely is Christianity targeted. If the fundamentalists are as righteous as they claim to be, then why don't they target the major religion of the West? This is significant, and supports the claim that Islamic fundamentalism is less religious than political. It appears as if it is the shell rather than the core which is Islamic. The religious cloak is used to attract followers and to justify action. Potential

members recognize elements from their socio-religious environment, although in a novel presentation. Islam is the glue that holds the fundamentalists together in their political, social, and cultural struggle. Fundamentalism has replaced the bygone-isms of Marxism, Pan-Arabism, and nationalism, none of which had much long-term success in Muslim societies. Fundamentalism is exactly what it claims to be: a step backwards in time and an ideology based on the lowest common denominator among very different people. When innocent bystanders are deliberately killed and activists choose to commit suicide, the move away from Islam is substantial.

The notion of a life world, as defined by Habermas, aptly describes the closed sphere inhabited by fundamentalist terrorists. How the world is perceived is founded on pre-established cultural patterns, which can only be changed over longer periods as they are connected to collective memories. The perception of being at the receiving end of all the injustices of this world can and will not be changed overnight. The stereotyping of the West by the fundamentalists is founded partly on reality and partly on myth. Both are eagerly embraced by fundamentalist leaders, who have no stake in sorting out the truth but focus on immediate change. For them a divided world is an established fact and also a useful tool in motivating Muslims to take action. The great Islamic revival they preach will pull Muslims back from the spiritual vacuum experienced in the Western world.

It is obvious that the anti-Western sentiments, however justified they may be, are a weighty motivational parameter for the fundamentalists. These sentiments lead to a sense of being something other than the West — in reality, something much better.

Conclusion

Islamic fundamentalism is a contemporary phenomenon running through Muslim societies like a current. There is a profusion of movements, parties, organizations, and charities all dedicated to the ideal of a society governed by Islam. The majority of these work through peaceful means and abhor violence, but quite a few perceive terrorism as legitimate. This working paper emphasizes the militant fundamentalists because the actions spurred by their ideology has greatly influenced current events and will continue to do so. From an anthropological perspective, it is an intriguing question why people would want to sacrifice themselves in the name of Jihad. It is a problem that demands attention and thorough research. This paper does not claim to provide a complete overview of the situation, but attempts to investigate the motivational parameters causing this particular type of terrorism.

Three main topics have been discussed here because they all contribute to the creation of a fundamentalist terrorist. There is no monocausal explanation, and the attempt to portray the terrorists through this perspective does not shed any light on the phenomenon. While admitting that a lot of work needs to be undertaken, it is safe to conclude that the three parameters are present for individual motivational purposes in most cases.

Embracing terrorism imparts a sense of importance and destiny to those who find the modern world to be stifling, chaotic, and dangerously out of control. In this context martyrdom becomes a real option for individuals desperately attempting to gain dignity and influence over their lives. The revived concept of martyrdom ties religious and socio-political parameters together. The reward for the ultimate sacrifice is both heavenly and worldly in nature, two qualities that cannot be separated. The fundamentalist terrorists do not operate individually but act in a disciplined and coordinated manner. The environment that they have constructed for themselves can be analyzed through an anthropological perspective, as it is highly social. This may seem like a contradiction in terms, but the environment illuminates what this type of terrorism is about.

Islam is extremely important in the ideological universe of the fundamentalists, but it is not the sole motivational parameter. The selective use of Quranic quotes and the insistence on the right to independent interpretation suggest that Islam is evolving, perhaps faster than is often realized. The idealization of the past and the attempt to recreate it does not represent a return to previous times. In its structure and essence it is a modern reflective project. The wish to establish the ideal Islamic society is built on myth and is an expression of a longing for authenticity not found in the modern world. The imaginative interpretation of the real meaning of central Islamic concepts such as Umma, Jihad and Jahiliyya serves a specific purpose that is much more

sociological in nature than religious. Islam is the glue that binds terrorist individuals and movements that otherwise have little in common. The fiery rhetoric serves as a force multiplier and Jihad becomes the banner for action.

As detailed in the section on social identity and modernization, the Muslim world is experiencing a crisis situation with severe ramifications for its social fabric. Factors such as unemployment, social inequality, and alienation have led to confusion and frustration. Detached from familiar networks, individuals create new alliances that provide spiritual security. The power of the terrorist cell over the individual hinges on a mutual understanding. The individual member starts over again and is given a new identity, so the past becomes irrelevant and obsolete. This is perceived by the terrorist to be a fair trade-off. By gaining access to the circles involved in changing the balance of international power relations, personal status is gained. He is now a *somebody*. This, I suspect, is highly motivational for distraught individuals who later on in their terrorist career transgress Islamic principles without scruples. For reasons of personal safety, but more importantly for reasons of personal identity, a return to a previous lifestyle is not an option. The hatred of the Western world should not be underestimated, however well founded this motivational parameter might be. Islamic fundamentalists have a fixed perception of the world, and whether it is related to myth or fact is irrelevant to them. A good part of their personal identity is built on seeing themselves as a part of the worldwide Muslim opposition. This vision of the enemy is critical to the fundamentalist project. The blaming process is dependent on an evil outside force bent on the destruction of Islam. This defensive maneuver projects internal dissent and confusion outwards and so the conspiracy myth remains alive and well.

The different motivational parameters briefly described in this paper cannot be ranked hierarchically. The importance attached to each of them requires a very personal deliberation. Some of the terrorists are religious fanatics, some are seeking personal vengeance, and still others sign up for Jihad to be part of a social group that matters. But for most of them it is a combination of these parameters, based on personal experiences and perceptions. The susceptibility to revolutionary ideology is linked to the general state of society. The sheer number of fundamentalist terrorists and sympathizers indicates that something is wrong somewhere. Contemporary Muslim societies obviously do not satisfy the needs and aspirations of the population. While the Western world fears the next terrorist spectacle, the real issue is quite possibly the rapid changes occurring simultaneously in the Muslim world. The nature of the response towards terrorism and fundamentalism in general will have a significant impact on the development of these societies. The inroads made by Islamic fundamentalism in recent years indicate that timing is a matter that should be taken into consideration. Why does Islamic fundamentalist terrorism appear at this moment in history? The underlying societal problems that the fundamentalists

address must be severe. So severe that a call for Jihad is embraced by a considerable number of people. The current trend of portraying fundamentalist terrorism as a religious phenomenon is inadequate and beside the point. The crisis is much deeper than this perspective claims.

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