The Backlash to Empire and the War on Terror

PS 142A.14
Summary

- As the U.S. seeks to extend the Liberal International Order and its informal empire into the Middle East, it creates a backlash against the regimes it favors and itself.

- Under authoritarian regimes in the region, religion has been sole acceptable social institution. Now a vehicle for dissent.

- Terrorism is the weapon of the weak. Targeted at secular/apostate regimes and the West more generally.
## U.S. Conflicts by Region, 1990-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Security Hierarchy

Figure 1.3. Military personnel across time (excluding Iraq and Kuwait).

Figure 1.4. Military personnel across time (including Iraq and Kuwait).
Economic Hierarchy

Figure 1.5. Economic hierarchy across time.
Indirect Rule
Al-Qaeda

- Founded in 1988 during resistance to Soviet Union in Afghanistan
- After Soviet Union withdraws in 1989, Osama bin Laden returns to Saudi Arabia
- When Iraq invades Kuwait, bin Laden offers to deploy his mujahideen to protect Saudi Arabia
- Bin Laden decries entry of Western forces into the “land of the two mosques.” Exiled to Sudan
Al-Qaeda

- Returns to Afghanistan and develops close relationship with Taliban
- Issues fatwa in 1996 announcing global jihad to expel foreign troops from Islamic lands
  - Connects with and incorporates other Jihadist groups into al-Qaeda
- In 1998, CIA Counterterrorism Center reports that al-Qaeda is preparing attacks in the U.S.
International Terrorist Attacks and Fatalities, 1968-2008

**FIGURE 6.3  International Terrorist Attacks and Fatalities, 1968–2008**

![Graph showing the number of attacks and fatalities from 1968 to 2008.](Image)


*The RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, the most comprehensive source for identifying attacks with an international component, was discontinued in 2009.*
Terrorism is Asymmetrical Warfare

- States are always stronger than terrorist groups, but not so strong that they can deter all attacks.
- Groups choose terrorism when they are too weak to fight the state directly.
- Object of terrorist is not to defeat the target’s military, but to inflict pain on civilians to induce political change.
Which Groups Choose Terror?

Terrorists are typically “extremists” who are weak relative to the goals they seek. That is, they lack significant popular support.

FIGURE 6.4  *Extremist Interests*
Who is a Terrorist?

FIGURE 6.5  The Number of Attacks and Fatalities by Group Goal, 1968–2005

Number of Attacks

- Religious: 809
- Rightist ideology: 879
- Nationalist/Separatist: 2,041
- Leftist ideology: 2,240
- Other: 255

Number of Casualties

- Religious: 30,823
- Leftist ideology: 21,997
- Nationalist/Separatist: 18,491
- Rightist ideology: 2,118
- Other: 824
Bin Laden disclaimed responsibility but praised the attacks.

- Explained motivation as generalized grievance against the U.S. and the West for oppressing Muslims
- Asserted that the U.S. was killing Muslims in Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, and Iraq
- Targeted “icons” of U.S. power

Pretty straight line from expanding U.S. presence in the region to attacks

Some evidence that attacks intended to provoke a “holy war” to reveal U.S. oppression
Al-Qaeda and its Affiliates (2005)
Global War on Terror (GWOT)

- **Changing Security Threats:**
  - Security problem at the heart of Westphalian system is great-power war
  - Now the core security problem is the threat of violence wielded by nonstate actors emanating from weak states

- **Response**
  - Bush Doctrine
  - Statebuilding
  - Preventive war
Bush’s Unipolar Grand Strategy

- U.S. will maintain its position of dominance
- U.S. has the right to use military force on a global battlefield
- U.S. has the right to act preemptively and preventively
- U.S. will act unilaterally if necessary
- Other’s support for GWOT will determine relationship with U.S.