The Backlash to Empire and the War on Terror

PS 142A.14
As the U.S. seeks to extend the LIO 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>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Permanent" U.S. Troops Deployments

- Middle East
- Iraq
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.
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*

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Attacks</th>
<th>Number of Casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious</strong></td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rightist ideology</strong></td>
<td>879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationalist/ Separatist</strong></td>
<td>2,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leftist ideology</strong></td>
<td>2,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leftist ideology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationalist/ Separatist</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rightist ideology</strong></td>
<td>2,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 30,823 attacks and 21,997 fatalities
9/11

- 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.