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**SEARCHING FOR JUSTICE AND SALVATION:
ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM AS A CHALLENGE TO
WESTERN-CENTRIC INTERNATIONAL ORDER:
*THE CASE OF AL QAEDA***

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While scholarly interest in the study of terrorism existed prior to the 11 September 2001 events, the location of the attack combined with its magnitude and sophistication generated new questions regarding the role of religious-driven terrorism in international politics.

Transnational terrorism presents a unique type of political violence in which the state, as perpetrator or target, is involved in unconventional conflict within and beyond its borders (Combs 2006). From a state-centric perspective, the need is to understand where threats to state security come from and what needs to be done to deal effectively with them (Nacos 2005, Banks *et al.* 2008). Despite its relevance and importance, this approach is rather limited because it focuses exclusively on the security of the state and overlooks that of the preservation of the system or society of states (Wight 1977; Bull 1977).

If one approaches the phenomenon of terrorism from a systemic perspective, two different types of terrorism emerge: first, terrorist activities that reinforce the idea of a society of sovereign states; and second, terrorist activities that undermine it. For example, attempts of individual states like Spain and Israel to deal with the challenges posed by the activities of groups like ETA and Hamas respectively contribute to the maintenance of international society through the preservation of its core unit, namely the state. On the other hand, terrorist activities that are associated with the efforts of groups to achieve statehood can also be seen as reinforcing the idea of international

society since they attempt to establish the fundamental unit of international society: the state (James 1986). For instance, ETA and Hamas aim at establishing independent states thereby reinforcing the idea of international society through the creation of additional core units. This is very paradoxical in the sense that attacks on the fundamental unit of the state system results in the creation of additional fundamental units. But this is a paradox that international society has lived and can still live with.

On the other hand, the terrorist activities of al Qaeda can be viewed as undermining the idea of international society in three distinctive although interrelated ways. First, they are aiming at the destruction of the defining unit of international society, namely the state and its replacement with another different type of political unit; second, they are aiming at the destruction of the international society itself and its replacement with another type of world order based on a different type of political unit; and third, by undermining some of the fundamental institutions of international society such as war, international law and diplomacy (Stivachtis 2008).

The paper's emphasis on religious organizations can be partly justified on the basis that their number among active terror organizations has arisen substantially since the 1980s (Hoffman 1998). However, the main reason for which the paper focuses on al Qaeda and other religious groups associated with al Qaeda's network is first, because of the divine legitimating sources of their claims and the apparently more revolutionary order they seek to create (Gray 2003).

However, it should be clarified from the outset that the paper rejects the assumption that terrorism is only associated with Islamic fundamentalism for history has clearly shown that other religions have pursued similar activities, including Christianity.

If international society is viewed by its member states as a normative good, then two questions arise. First, is it the responsibility of all members of the international society to respond to this type of terrorist threats or, at least, collaborate towards this end, or that of individual states? And second, what happens when some members of international society do not wish to respond to these threats or even collaborate towards this end?

International Society and Its Preservation

In order to understand how a challenge to state sovereignty may reflect a threat to the order on which the international society is based, one first needs first to comprehend the way in which order is established in the international system; and second, to realize that international or global order may take various forms with the international society or society of states being one of the alternatives. Although the society of states, based on the principle of state sovereignty, has existed for a few hundred years (Osiader 2001), systemic threats that "undermine the state system have not been acknowledged, and consequently states' ability to face challenges to the system has been curtailed" (Mendelsohn 2005).

Central to our analysis is Hedley Bull's distinction between an international system and an international society. An international system is formed when "two or more states have sufficient contact and sufficient impact upon one another's decisions, to cause them to behave as parts of a whole" (Bull 1977, 9). International society, on the other hand, is "a group of states which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behavior of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of others, but also have established by dialogue and common consent rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements" (Bull 1977, 12-13; Bull and Watson 1984, 1). Therefore, an international society is based not only on the convergence of interests between states, but also on a sense of community that binds states together and provides them with general guidelines to membership, including rights and obligations. This sense of community moderates states' behavior and allows for general order to exist.

Following the logic of Bull's definitions, the existence of an international society presupposes the existence of an international system since the definition of the former constitutes an extension of the latter's definition. An international system, however, does not necessarily take the form of an international society unless it has developed to a point where states establish "by dialogue and common consent rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements". Despite the fact that Bull's distinction has received considerable criticism, it has been accepted as a practical formula that helps scholars to distinguish different types and degrees of relations existing among states. The general agreement is that an international society may present itself in either a 'thin' or 'thick' form with the international system being its 'thin' version.

Bull argues that the international society has various goals including the preservation of the society of states, maintaining the independence of states, establishing peace as the normal condition in international relations, and achieving the common goals of all social life, such as limiting violence, keeping promises, and establishing possessions (Bull 1977, 16). Although he does not commit himself to a ranking of these goals, from Bull's account it appears that the preservation of the system overrides the other goals and even justifies violation of the principle of sovereignty (Bull 1977, 18).

According to Bull (1977, 53), order in the international society is maintained through shared values and interests, by the rules that states establish, and by the institutions that enforce these rules. He suggests three sets of rules that help in sustaining international order: constitutional normative principles, 'rules of coexistence', and rules that regulate cooperation among states (Bull 1977, 67). These rules are supported by fundamental institutions, such as the balance of power, international law, diplomacy, war, and the great powers. This list is not exhaustive since other scholars have identified additional institutions (Jackson 1990, 2000; Mayal 1990, 2000; Wight 1979; Buzan 2004). Nevertheless, there is a consensus among scholars that international law remains an important primary institution that serves order in the international society by identifying the idea of a society of sovereign states as the core normative principle of the political organization of the world, as well as stating the rules of coexistence between states, and helping in achieving compliance with the rules of the international society.

Although the preservation of international society appears to be the first and most important goal of its member states, it has received little attention by scholars and analysts. For example, discussion about threats to international security in the aftermath of the Cold War has mainly focused on the establishment of norms against wars. However, the context in which such a discussion takes place is the preservation of peace rather than an explicit recognition that such wars endanger the foundations of the international society.

Several scholars have pointed out that the state is in decline and non-state actors have showed signs of successfully influencing states' policies and taking over subject areas that the state largely ignored or mishandled (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Whether and to what extent these trends represent threats to the state system is highly controversial. Nevertheless, even if valid, these claims still concern an attack on the international society by forces using only means that are considered legitimate.

A different type of threat to international society comes from violent non-state actors who deny the legitimacy of the state system and the foundations on which the society of states is based, and advance alternative types of international order. Al Qaeda and its network represent such violent non-state actors. The latter can challenge the international society in two essential ways. First, they may reject and undermine the basic rules on which the international society is founded, and the institutions that help in maintaining order. Such challenges can manifest themselves in the rejection of the state as the main political unit in international politics; the rejection of the principle that states are sovereign to contract with other states and to pursue independent foreign policy; the negation of the principle that states are the sole actors who can legitimately use force; and the dismissal of accepted restrictions on the use of force. Such positions constitute an attack on international law as a legitimate institution of the international society and, as an extension, an attack on the international society itself. Similarly, a rejection of the legitimacy of the United Nations may be understood as a challenge to the state system, as the UN embodies the members of the international society (Mendelsohn 2005, 51).

A second way in which a violent non-state actor may undermine the international society is by provoking an overreaction by the hegemon that leads to the breakdown of the accepted code of conduct for states' behavior in general and for the hegemon's in particular (Mendelsohn 2005, 53). This can be done by magnifying the conflict between the hegemon's dual roles as systemic leader and great power, provoking it to act in accordance with the latter at the expense of the former. As Bruce Cronin explains (2001, 30), a dominant country's role as a systemic leader is one of the international society institutions. Within international society, the institution of hegemony generates specific norms of behavior. The hegemon enjoys certain recognized rights, but it also assumes obligations including certain limits on its behavior, among them respecting legal sovereign equality, following the rules, avoiding unilateral acts that may violate them, and accommodating secondary powers of major importance.

But the dominant state also has a role as a great power, which are identified by Bull as one of the five core institutions of international society. A great power's adherence to overwhelming domestic considerations could undermine its leadership role as a hegemon and consequently the international society for which hegemony is a pillar institution. As the example of the United States illustrate, a great power may try to define a particular situation as affecting not only its own security but also that of the system as a whole, in order to bring the two roles in agreement. However, such redefinition may require renegotiating the boundaries for what is considered legitimate behavior. If the hegemon fails to accommodate the concerns of the other members of the international society and to legitimize new boundaries for its actions, the outcome can be erosion of the international society. Consequently, one may argue that al Qaeda sought to undermine international society by provoking the overreaction of the United States, which led to the breakdown of the international society's accepted code of conduct.

Religion and International Order

Generally speaking, religion offers a competing logic to the sovereignty-based state system. This holds true for all religions since they advocate a *heaven order* that is very much different from the *cosmic order*. According to Mendelsohn (2005 & 2007), the religious challenge unfolds in several ways. The religious source of authority is divine and higher than the state's authority. As states and religions share the same constituency, religious people need to balance between the religious and the national aspects of their identity. However, when the two clash, religious people might be trapped because they cannot obey a state law that contradicts 'higher' religious imperatives. As Mendelsohn indicates (2005, 55), the state-religion balance collapses when dealing with fundamentalists who believe that God's kingdom is part of this world. Indeed, for people who hold such a view, the placing of sovereignty in any authority other than God is usurpation of 'God's throne' (Zartman 2001). Thus, a confrontation between state and religious logics represents a possible erosion of the international society.

Most religious groups confine their attacks to the sovereignty of a specific state. Therefore, they tolerate the international society or ever accept it, focusing instead on influencing the policies of the states in which they live or on altering the regime and imposing religious rule. However, there are religious groups that do not confine their attacks to a specific territory but seek to transform the state system by creating a new world order based on their religion. Such groups challenge the foundations of the international society. According to Mendelsohn (2005, 55), religion challenges the territorial dimension of the state and, as an extension the international society, in three ways: first, by not recognizing arbitrary national borders; second, by claiming the formation of a religious territorial-based entity that includes all of its members; and third, by invoking the idea of 'holy war.' Mendelsohn (2005, 2007) and Tibi (1998) discuss convincingly how and why al Qaeda and other Islamic fundamentalist groups pose a serious challenge both to state sovereignty and the existence of international society.

The paper's central point is that al Qaeda not only poses serious challenges to individual states but rather to the international society as a whole. As Mendelsohn puts it, "the conception of international society allows us a more comprehensive picture of Al Qaeda's challenge, both to the sovereignty of specific states, and to the principles, rules, and institutions that bind states together in a society" (Mendelsohn 2005, 46). This approach has significant practical implications. For example, if the most important task of the international society is to preserve the state system and this goal overrides its other goals when they conflict with it, as Bull (1997, 16) has suggested, and if al Qaeda poses a threat to the international society as a whole, then the required response should be collective and not restricted to the few countries that were directly targeted.

Despite its significant strengths, the limitation of Mendelsohn's approach is that he understands international society as being by definition a normative good that deserves to be defended and preserved. In other words, he does not address the question whether there are certain features in international society that contribute to the rise, magnitude, and ruthlessness of terrorism. The problem with terrorists may not be the international society itself but what it represents, how it has developed, its refusal to treat its members in an equal manner, and its inability to deliver goods that are equally distributed among its members. One may argue that Mendelsohn approaches the international society from a Euro-centric or Western-centric perspective ignoring at the same time how this society of states may be perceived by non-Western states and people.

Before we proceed, a word of caution is required. Many scholars and analysts are of the opinion that al Qaeda has clearly defined political goals that do not undermine international society. In other words, al Qaeda, they argue, is only searching for social justice within the given Westphalian state-centric international order. Consequently, in their opinion, al Qaeda does not aim at the destruction of international society and its fundamental unit. Neither does Al Qaeda, according to them, seek to replace international society as a form of international order with another type of world order based on a different type of political unit. Consequently, al Qaeda's activities are not viewed as undermining in any way any of the fundamental institutions of international society. Finally, these scholars and analysts believe that even if al Qaeda wished to establish an independent political unit this could only result in the creation a new state within the existing system of states. What these scholars and analysts take for granted is that all political units are like states and hence the expectation is that a *Khalifate* would look and act like China or the United States. Because this is a very important debate, the next part of this paper will be dedicated to addressing this issue.

Al Qaeda and Its Challenge to International Society

On September 11, 2001, nineteen men under the leadership of the radical Islamist organization al-Qaeda hijacked four American planes, crashing two into the World Trade Center towers, one into the Pentagon, and one into a rural Pennsylvania field. Why would these men commit such a heinous act? A host of reasons have been offered from academics and politicians, apologists and polemicists, secularists and

theists, pointing to Islam itself, righteous anger against biased U.S. policies, material want, even envy and sexual frustration. Within this ongoing debate, however, a part of al-Qaeda's own words has often been overlooked or dismissed. The present section is meant to fill that gap.

By now, people in the Western world are vaguely familiar with some of al Qaeda's messages. Every so often, the images of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri surface, usually on the Arabic satellite station al-Jazeera, condemning the West and arguing that al-Qaeda is merely retaliating for all the injustices the West, and the United States in particular, has brought upon Muslims. These speeches are then translated and posted on the Internet. Largely unknown in the Western world, however, are al-Qaeda's theological treatises, which justify and glorify violence and hatred toward the West within an Islamic framework (Ibrahim 2007, 2). Written for Muslim audiences, they are rarely translated into English or disseminated to a non-Muslim public.¹ This is unfortunate, since they reveal much more about al-Qaeda's ideology than the more famous political speeches.

Here lies the great debate about the preservation or destruction of international society. While the political messages of al Qaeda point to the existence of demands of social justice that do not undermine the states system, its theological messages point exactly to the opposite direction. Specifically, in these theological texts, al-Qaeda gives Muslim people reasons why they should hate and fight the West that differ substantially from those they give in their political speeches. In the latter, Bin Laden and al Zawahiri insist that they are waging a 'defensive Jihad' against an oppressive West. When discussing the tenets of Islam, however, they argue that Muslims should battle the West because it is the infidel, or the 'Great Satan.'

In fact, al Qaeda's theological texts call for actions that fall within a context of a 'clash of religions.' This does not mean that Islam and Christianity cannot co-exist - because they can - but rather that al Qaeda wishes to convince its followers that they cannot. But how can one explain the existence of two opposing types of rhetoric?

In certain respects, al Qaeda's political and theological texts agree over certain grievances (Kepel 2006): that the West is oppressive and unjust toward Islam, heedlessly or out of malice spilling the blood of innocent Muslims all around the world; that the West supports ruthless and dictatorial regimes in the Islamic world; that the West is responsible for the Israeli occupation of Palestine; that the West has killed one million Iraqi children; and so on. Thus a link between political and religious goals is already established in the minds of Muslim people. This is the first part of al Qaeda's strategy.

¹ The author does not read Arabic and therefore his analysis will rely on the translation and interpretation of al Qaeda's theological texts provided my native scholars.

Due to a lack of understanding by many governments, which usually results in the choice of wrong strategy, unfortunately, al Qaeda knows in advance that its actions will be met with reprisals by the affected states, while many of its political demands will not be met by the international community. Therefore, it is very easy to frame reprisals as attacks on the people of Islam who fight for just causes, as well as capitalize on the dissatisfaction of the Muslim world which sees many of its problems unresolved. In addition, al Qaeda seeks to capitalize on the West's usually wrong rhetoric, which has the tendency to put all Muslims in the 'same basket.' Since no distinction is drawn between Muslims, the expectation of al Qaeda is that Muslims begin to view western actions not only as hurting their political interests identified in al Qaeda's political discourse but also as being against their religion. Hence with no option and exit left, they would run to defend al Qaeda's theological manifestos and ideas associated with them. Thus it is in the political interest of al Qaeda to emphasize a 'clash of religions' in order to mobilize political and social support for its goals. The fact that political circles in the West speak of an inevitable 'clash of civilizations' makes al Qaeda's strategy even more successful.

The following two subsections, which will cover al Qaeda's theological positions and political demands complement each other and take steps toward solving the al-Qaeda conundrum. They give both the religious and the 'official' reasons for al-Qaeda and its supporters' war on the West, in general, and the United States in particular. More important, when juxtaposed, they reveal some startling contradictions and inconsistencies.

Al Qaeda's Theology

Al Qaeda's theological positions can be found in four documents (one essay and three treatises), which were only translated very recently. These documents provide the reader with the religious justifications for al-Qaeda's radical worldview that clearly undermines the idea of international society. The first of these documents has been written by Osama bin Laden, while the rest of them have been written by al Zawahiri. Despite their author's claim, these documents have the character of treatises (not *fatwas*) for they develop themes well established in Islamic thinking. Zawahiri uses them to remind the Muslim *umma* of their obligations. Only the questions of martyrdom and the killing of innocents in the third treatise are not universally agreed on in Islam, and thus can be considered a *fatwa*.

Bin Laden's document entitled "Moderate Islam Is a Prostration to the West," is one of al-Qaeda's most important documents. In it, moderate Muslims are condemned for trying to peacefully coexist or even hold dialogue with non-Muslims. 'Offensive Jihad' is defended as not only legitimate but obligatory. Muslims are exhorted to always hate, discriminate, humiliate, and debase non-Muslims. This essay contradicts the message of 'reciprocity' that al-Qaeda uses in its political texts meant for Western

consumption, implying that bin Laden's war is a total war that is not susceptible to olive branches or negotiation with the enemy (Bin Laden 2007, 22-65).

In "Loyalty and Enmity," Zawahiri urges Muslims to be loyal to Islam and each other at all times while maintaining hostility and hatred toward non-Muslims (Zawahiri 2002/2007a, 66-115). Muslims are advised to be loyal to each other even when they disagree while displaying enmity for non-Muslims even if the latter are kind and just dealing. When Muslims are strong and capable, they are instructed to wage 'offensive jihad' in order to bring the light of Islam to the infidels; but when they are weak and incapable, they are to dissemble in front of the infidels and act like their friends while maintaining contempt for them in their hearts. In his effort, Zawahiri quotes the Koran itself: "You have a good example in Abraham and those who followed him, for they said to their people, "We disown you and the idols which you worship besides Allah. We renounce you: enmity and hate shall reign between us until you believe in Allah alone" (60:4). And: "O you who have believed! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are but friends of each other; and whoever among you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them" (5:51). And: "You shall find none who believe in Allah and the Last Day on friendly terms with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger-even if they be their fathers, their sons, their brothers, or their nearest kindred" (58:22).

In, "*Sharia* and Democracy," Zawahiri outlines the obligation of Muslims to establish and uphold *sharia* law while condemning all other forms of governance, especially democracy, which is depicted in Islam as paganism (Zawahiri 1991/2007b, 120-36). This belief is not subject to question; rather, it is fundamental to Islam itself. Islam, according to Zawahiri, is a meticulous way of life based on Allah's law (*sharia*), not merely a profession of faith limited to the Five Pillars of Islam (profession, prayer, fasting, alms, and pilgrimaging). Every form of man-made governance: democracy, monarchy, communism, etc. – is therefore anathema to Islam, since the power to legislate is Allah's alone. Though the enforcement of *sharia* law would seem to concern Muslims alone, it is in fact the basis of the animosity between Islam and the infidel world. According to Zawahiri, 'offensive Jihad', *dhimmitude*, and enmity for infidels - all these are based on the *sharia*. Therefore, any Muslim who upholds *sharia* law, which is the very definition of a Muslim, that is, "one who submits [to the Laws of] Allah" - must acknowledge its divine authority.

In "Jihad, Martyrdom, and the Killing of Innocents;" Zawahiri establishes that jihad in the service of making Allah's word supreme is a fundamental pillar of Islam (Zawahiri 2007c, 141-71). He argues that suicide bombers are the greatest of jihad's holy warriors (mujahidin). Next Zawahiri takes up the controversial issue of killing those whose blood is forbidden from being shed -women, children, Muslims, and *dhimmis* - during a jihad or raid. This is perhaps the most legalistic document. In it Zawahiri legitimizes suicide bombings as well as the killing of innocents.

These four documents provide a picture of a world, which is structured and functions very differently from the Westphalian society of states. In fact, a careful analysis of the implications of the argumentation found in these documents clearly reveals that the contemporary international society of states is incompatible with al Qaeda's vision and worldview. And if al Qaeda's view is to prevail, international society should consequently go.

Al Qaeda's Political Goals

In contrast to its theological texts, al-Qaeda's political messages are directed to the world at large, particularly the West and they tend to be much less revealing than their theological counterparts. Their purpose was to demoralize the West while inciting the *umma* (Ibrahim 2007, 5) Although there is a discussion of 'D]defensive Jihad', which, due to the adjective 'defensive,' makes jihad palatable to more universal, not just Muslim, sensibilities, there is no mention of 'offensive Jihad,' enmity for infidels, the enforcement of *dhimmitude*, or Islam and the West. Instead, al Qaeda's political messages focus on enumerating the many injustices the West has visited upon Islam.

The style and length of these messages contrast sharply with their theological counterparts. Formulated to maximize their impact on the intended audience, they are much shorter and to the point than Zawahiri's comprehensive and scholarly treatises. Most of these messages to the West are also delivered in video. The image and voice of a healthy, dignified, determined, and armed bin Laden or Zawahiri is meant to discourage the West just as it is meant to awe and motivate would-be sympathizers around the globe. It is a tactic of psychological warfare. Concise and focused, each message gives al-Qaeda the opportunity to enumerate the many sins of the West.

These messages portray a world where the West and particularly the United States wage unjust and cruel wars solely to serve the avaricious interests of a few—usually American and Jewish elites; not to bring about justice or freedom. Thus blood is being spilled in Iraq simply to secure Israel and oil. America also expresses the “old Crusader hatred” and seeks to finish what European Crusaders started almost a millennium ago when Jerusalem was (temporarily) annexed from the Muslims. The West is accused of being the sole support for the dictatorial secular regimes that govern Muslim countries. Nonetheless, these messages emphasize, al-Qaeda and its affiliates are winning the war in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the world. Terrorist acts are justified because they retaliate for previous terrorist acts committed by the United States and its proxies (which, according to bin Laden and Zawahiri, are legion).

Al-Qaeda claims that violence is just retribution for Western injustice and that Islam authorizes this position. Practically every message issued by al-Qaeda to the West revolves around the theme of 'reciprocal treatment.' When speaking to the West in general, bin Laden generally states:

"Why should fear, killing, destruction, displacement, orphaning, and widowing continue to be our lot, while security, stability, and happiness is yours? This is injustice. The time to settle accounts has arrived: just as you kill, so shall you be killed; just as you bomb, so shall you be bombed. Expect more to come."

The attacks of 9/11 are presented as payback for U.S. complicity in Israel's invasion of Beirut, when Arab skyscrapers were demolished with their Muslim inhabitants still inside. Thus al-Qaeda's actions can be summarized through the simple syllogism, "an eye for an eye" which all people, not just Muslims, can appreciate.

In contrast to al-Qaeda's theological treatises, which undermine the idea of international society, the organization's political texts are entirely compatible with it. Al-Qaeda plays less on anger at the West for specific grievances in most of its literature than on religious sentiments inherent in Islamic doctrine. The political messages are clearly designed for a Western audience, which by nature is more receptive to concise and emotional arguments. In other words, al Qaeda's political messages are about social justice within the existing system of states. The question, however, is: which set of goals are better associated with the organization's end goal?

Al Qaeda and Systemic Terrorism

The end of the Cold War was hailed by declarations of 'the end of history' (Fukuyama 1992). However, two important realities were overlooked: first, the post-Cold War reality did not represent a win-win situation for all the actors in the system; and second, state-based international societies can also be replaced by other types of systems that are structurally and qualitatively different.

From 1960 to the end of 1980s, terrorist activities were concerned mostly with economic distribution in the international system. There was concern over the advantages already accumulated by the advanced states and the difficulty late-comers to the system were having in their attempt to shake off patterns of exploitation. Neither terrorism nor any other attempt to achieve economic reform managed to bring about any positive change. The end of state-centric economic approaches - such as the Latin American debt crisis - and the collapse of the Eastern bloc along with the Soviet Union drove home the point that alternative economic approaches to those espoused by the 'winners', which constitute the core of this international society, were not viable solutions. Even worse, many developing states and their peoples saw the proposed solutions as new schemes of exploitation and oppression.

Thus the victory of the West was not a victory for all. Economically, large gaps of material distribution remained. There have been relatively few countries, among those which were formerly colonized, to come close to closing the economic gap. Politically, the situation is perhaps even more troubling for those who are left behind. Among other things, it was realized that in the history of the modern international society, there has not been one non-Western, non-European state that has grown

within the system. The Ottoman Empire, Persia, China, Siam had all experienced growth outside of the European society of states, and had been absorbed into the system at a late state of their development. Even those countries never really got to make the rules or transform the institutions of the modern international system in a way that affected all the actors within that system. The original rules, norms and institutions stemming from the European society of states have more-or-less survived, intact, in each stage of the European expansion. If anything they have become more sweeping, more universal and more pervasive.

Since the world-status hierarchy has not changed very much in the last couple of centuries, developing states and other actors in the system have come to believe that they cannot win. Economically, developing states try catch-up; culturally and politically, they have to keep bending, having to make costly light-speed political transitions, most of the time induced from above and outside. They cannot become great powers, by altering the borders or by possessing WMD, because that is no longer allowed by the norms and the rules of the system (Lustick 1997). They cannot even be left on their own to set up their own economic model or religious state. It is in this atmosphere that the new wave of terrorism has developed.

The current wave of terrorism can be called 'systemic terrorism.' If the last wave of terrorism was primarily concerned with the economic distribution in the world, the current one is about challenging the international political order (Junaid 2005). The terrorist organizations of the previous waves always had a particular state or state government as a primary target. They sought to replace the current leadership of a particular state or area in order to create new sovereign state (according to the Westphalian archetype) that was more to their liking ideologically. They did not question the practicality of the nation-state model. In contrast, the current wave of terrorism, as heralded and manifested most explicitly by al-Qaeda, questions the legitimacy of the state and the international society in which it is embedded. Because the state and the international society presume each other, constitute each other, and cannot be separated from each other, systemic terrorism challenges the entire system of states.

Al-Qaeda's rhetoric should be taken seriously. The members of Al-Qaeda and its associated network want to replace the nation state model with an ummah-community, which would theoretically mirror the Islamic empire that existed during Mohammed's reign (Wright 2006). Regardless of whether this is aspiration that could ever be fulfilled, as an ideal it stands far apart from anything resembling the modern state. The political community evolved by this ideal is one without fixed borders; this would be a community united by faith under a ruler legitimized by that faith, where there was no presumption of equality for individuals, but rather a presumption of equality for believers. Al-Qaeda and its associated organizations do not seek to replace any particular government in its home turf of heavily Muslim populated areas. Therefore, they strike all around the world. Their aim is to bring down the international system/society because that is the only way rules can change.

Islam, however, is not the cause of systemic terrorism. Its fundamentalist version, however, offers a convenient vessel to translate the grievances of people in a particular part of the world against the international society, for several reasons (Kepel 2006; Ali 2003). First, while other non-European systems developed

independently from Europe and have come into contact with Europe in a period of European might, the Islamic civilizations developed along side Europe. The memory of periods where Europe, and by proxy the 'West,' was the weaker and the more backward of the two systems lingers on. Second, the Islamic arrangement of organizing human communities offers an alternative world-demarcating principle to both the nation-state and the individualist justifications of the modern state system. While proponents of communism, for instance, could offer no viable alternative to organizing states other than by national self-determination, separation along religious lines is almost as commonsensical to the 'man on the street' as is organization along nation-state lines. Religious affiliation is at least as universalizing principle as nationalism is, and there is enough history of religious divides for the construction of primordial appeals along the veins of nationalism. Finally, because Islam offers equality to those who join the ranks of believers, it is also appealing to those non-Muslims who are from parts of the world that because their geography, race or ethnicity can never be equals of the Western countries within the current system. Of course, one should not suppose that a more equal and equitable world could necessarily be created under this Islamic vision. What matters, however, to al-Qaeda followers and other local terrorist organizations that are slowly joining this systemic cause under the al-Qaeda banner, is that the current system has extracted too high of a cost for promises of equality and advancement that were never delivered.

All of this does not mean that only Islam would offer the right context for systemic terrorism. Any non-Western ideology that does not recognize the legitimacy of the citizen-based state model, the dichotomies between public and private, or the sovereignty principle could give rise to systemic terrorism. For the foreseeable future, there seems to be no contenders. However, if Al Qaeda was crushed, alternatives would arise.

Of the terrorist organizations still active in the current wave of terrorism, some are holdovers from previous periods. Of these holdovers, the anti-imperialist terrorist organizations will either disappear or reincarnate as Al-Qaeda collaborators. There is an emerging trend of Muslim movements studying Marx and socialism, so this is not a possibility that should be discounted. Al-Qaeda's system replacement vision is appealing to all groups unhappy with the macro power distribution in the international system. Secessionist movements will continue as before, unless they are driven by religious ideologies such as the Abu Syyaf Group in the Phillipines. These religious-secessionist organizations have already joined ranks with al-Qaeda. Finally, of the groups that were seeking regime change in their countries, specifically those who were looking to create *Sharia* governments will sooner or later rank up with Al-Qaeda's network re-shaping the current wave of terrorism.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that there are two types of terrorism: one that promotes the idea of international society as a particular type of international order and one that undermines it. Focusing on the theological texts of al Qaeda the paper has suggested that the religious positions of al Qaeda undermine the idea of international society, while the organization's political positions are compatible with it. This inconsistency

can be explained with reference to al Qaeda's strategy aiming at mobilizing the maximum possible political and social support of its goals.

The paper claims that international society should not necessarily be viewed as representing a normative good that deserves to be defended and preserved. The problem with terrorist groups, including al Qaeda, may not be the international society itself but what it represents, how it has developed, its refusal to treat its members in an equal manner, and its inability to deliver goods that are equally distributed among its members. The history of the expansion of the European society of states and its transformation to the contemporary global international society reveals that the geographical center of power in the modern international society has not shifted since the European society of states started expanding. There has not been a single developing country to rise in the ranks of political/economic ladder and become a part of the core of decision-making actors in the system. A few non-Western countries improved their situation but were never fully accepted at the top. A system with so little upward mobility is marked with status stratification, where belonging is primarily determined by 'lifestyle' judgments.

This is not to deny that there is some economic and material mobility in the system. A very interesting feature of the modern international system is that ideologically and ontologically it does not legitimize status divides. However, status stratification has been part of this system since its inception. In the post-Cold War era, a system that has fully matured to spanning the entire globe still has not broken out of this status mold. The reality does not match the legitimizing rhetoric of the system, the rhetoric of 'equal opportunity.' The failure of the equality, prosperity, and upward mobility promise attached to the nation-state is what lies beneath the resentment in the developing world and it is as real as any economic grievance.

The recent riots in France or the violent protests about the Danish cartoons were not about jobs or religion *per se*. The real problem was people having to live with standards not of one's own making and still getting no respect or results. What is the heart of this kind of behavior is not irrational anger but rather disillusionment with the current system and the core countries in the system. This is why there is considerable sympathy for al Qaeda in some parts of the world. As long as the developing world sees the international society to continue displaying what they perceive as negative attitudes, threats to the existence of the state system coming from a variety of terrorist groups will also continue. Even worse, terrorist activities can even be exacerbated.

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