

# Terrorism

# Defining terrorism

- Terrorism as an adjective: “An act intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act.”
  - UN Panel on Terrorism
- Terrorist as a noun: A group that engages in acts of terrorism.
  - Yet, this is tricky because nearly all groups have attacked civilians.

# Classifying Terrorism

- Domestic Terrorism: acts of violence by non-state actors against domestic political opponents.
  - Ideological (e.g. Marxist, Islamist)
  - Ethnic
  - E.g. ETA (Spain), GIA (Algeria)
- State terrorism: acts of violence and intimidation by the state against its own population.
  - E.g. Argentina's 'Dirty War.'

# Classifying Terrorism

- State-sponsored terrorism: acts of violence supported by and/or funded by external state actors (proxy war).
  - E.g. RUF in Sierra Leone.
- International terrorism: acts of violence by nationals of one country against the citizens/state of another country.
  - E.g. Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah

# Why terrorism?

- Psychological theories: terrorism is explained by hatred, anger, frustration, and resentment.
  - Expressive
  - The act of violence is an end of itself.
- Discrimination, political powerlessness, economic inequality, ethnic/cultural tension.

# Why Terrorism

- Rational theories: groups seek broader political goals. Terrorism is used as a tactical tool to achieve broader ends.
- Long-term goals are varied and include control of the state, secession, global 'revolution'.
- Intermediate goals of terrorism:
  - Mobilization/propaganda
  - Intimidation/acquiesce
  - Provocation

# David Lake: “Rational Extremism”

Extremist groups operate at the fringes of society, yet want to attract a larger support base.

Launch extreme, symbolic terror attacks to provoke a disproportionate response.

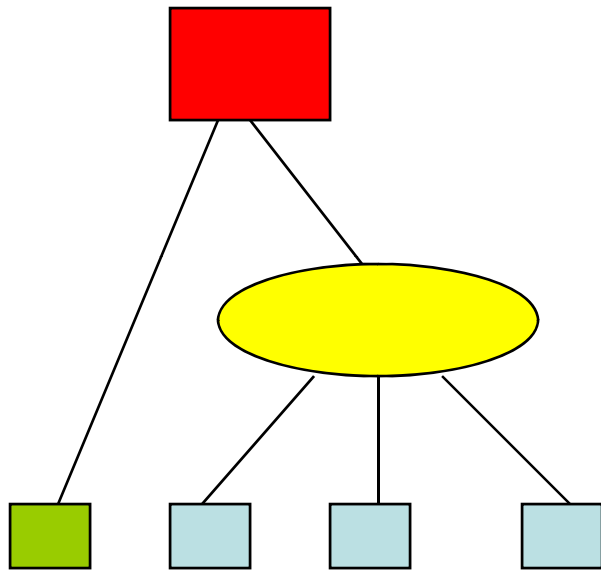
Response alienates moderates, driving them into the arms of the extremists.

# Transnational Actors vs. the State

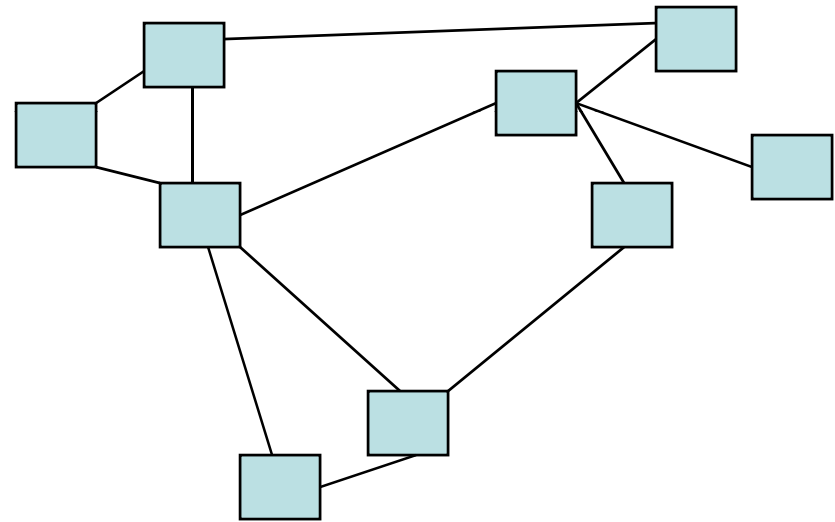
- States have power and authority within their own borders to limit subversive activity.
- Conflicts with other states are resolved by bargaining and/or force.
- International terrorism difficult to deal with because actors spread among multiple states.
  - Requires extensive coordination and cooperation.
  - E.g. airline regulations.
- Network structure makes bargaining and counter-terrorism difficult.
  - Who “surrenders”? Who speaks for the “group”?
  - “Cut of the head” logic doesn’t apply.



# Networks versus Hierarchies



Hierarchical Structure



Network Structure

Al-Qaeda

# Militant Islam

- Islam is subject to wide variety of interpretations, like other world religions.
- Although vast majority of Muslims do not condone violence, Islam (as with other religions) has a militant strain.
- Definition of 'Jihad': Struggle against evil.
  - Can be personal or public.
  - Can be through social activism or force.

# Islamic Political Thought

(within Sunni Islam)

- Shari'a: Islamic law (regulates crime, commerce, family law, diet, etc).
- Secularists: religion is a private matter, separation of religion and politics.
- Reformists: Islam is a progressive religion and is compatible with human rights and democracy.
- Traditional/Orthodox: Islam should be the only source of law, based on orthodox legal schools (madhabs).
- Salafists & Wahhabis: Return to the 'pure' Islam of Mohammed and his compatriots.

# Militant Islam

- Mostly rooted in Salafist traditions (but not all espouse violence!).
- Ideological forerunner:
  - Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966)
  - Coming to grips with underdevelopment in ME. Rejection of Western ideologies.
- Rejects the secular nation-state model in favor of an Islamic government.
- Gripes with the 'West' and the U.S.:
  - Global penetration of Western cultural products and values.
  - Support for authoritarian, non-Islamic governments.
  - Support for Israel.
  - US troops in Saudi Arabia.

# Restoration of the Caliphate



Ottoman Empire



Modern Middle East

# Al-Qaeda: Origins in Afghan War

- Literally means “the Base”.
- Origins in Afghan war against USSR.
  - 1979, Soviets invade to prop up Socialist govt.
  - Afghan resistance organizations (mujahedin) based in Pakistan, supported by US.
  - Foreign fighters from across Muslim world, but particularly in Gulf States join the fight.
  - Foreign fighters guided by puritanical beliefs.
  - Maktab al-Khadamat founded by Osama bin Laden to fund Afghan war.

# Al-Qaeda: First Gulf War

- Osama bin Laden returns to Saudi Arabia after USSR leaves Afghanistan.
- Iraq invades Kuwait in 1990, feared that Saudi Arabia would be next.
- OBL offers to mobilize mujahedin forces to protect SA, liberate Kuwait.
- Instead, SA turns to US for protection.
  - OBL outraged that foreign troops stationed in ‘holy lands’.
- OBL’s Saudi citizenship is revoked, forced to flee the country.



# Al-Qaeda: Founding in Sudan

- OBL moves to Sudan, forms Al-Qaeda.
- Al-Qaeda funds road construction projects and charitable works in exchange for protection of Sudanese gov't.
- Also begins to run training camps for militant activities.
- 1994, Al-Qaeda allegedly involved in plan to assassinate Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak
- 1996, US demands that Sudan expels Al-Qaeda.

# Al-Qaeda: back in Afghanistan

- Interlude in Bosnia; failure to get Bosnian Muslims to back radical program.
- After USSR withdrawal and US ending support, internal war in Afghanistan.
- Taliban takes Kabul in 1996.
- OBL and Al-Qaeda move operations to Afghanistan.
- 1996, OBL issues a 'fatwa' to expel foreign troops from Islamic lands.
  - Lacks any religious credentials to issue fatwas.
- 1998, OBL and Ayman al-Zawahiri issue fatwa to kill civilians.

# Al-Qaeda Fatwa

“The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies, civilians and military, is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem) and the holy mosque (in Mecca) from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim.”

# Al-Qaeda' Goals

- **Remove Authoritarian/Un-Islamic leaders and restore the caliphate:**
  - “After the fall of our orthodox caliphates on March 3, 1924 and after expelling the colonialists, our Islamic nation was afflicted with apostate rulers who... turned out to be more infidel and criminal than the colonialists themselves.” –AQ training manual.
- **Removal of foreign ideologies and values:**
  - “They [the leaders] started spreading godless and atheistic views among the youth. We found some that claimed that socialism was from Islam, democracy was [compatible with Islam]...” –AQ training manual.

# Al-Qaeda and the US

- Belief that if the US withdraws from the Middle East, stops funding and arming states in the region (e.g. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan), these regimes will fall and allow Islamic governments to take hold.

# Al-Qaeda Today

- Suffered major setback when US invaded Afghanistan.
- Now beginning to regroup across the border in tribal areas of Pakistan.
- Al-Qaeda affiliated organizations appearing in Iraq, though operating independently.
  - Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia.
- Groups in Africa, S. Asia, and elsewhere now using the Al-Qaeda 'brand.'

# US National Intelligence Estimate

## April, 2006

- “We assess that the Iraq jihad is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives; perceived jihadist success there would inspire more fighters to continue the struggle elsewhere. The Iraq conflict has become the ‘cause celebre’ for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of US involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement.”