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Table of Contents:

Conceptualizing a New School of Political Conflict and Terrorism Studies:

From Attributes to Behavior and Why Policy Makers will Care

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Some interesting changes in the interchange among US government officials and social science researchers, political scientists in particular, in the nation's universities are afoot. One might date the beginning of this new relationship to then Vice President Al Gore's initiation of the State Failure Project in 1994.[1] More recently, the Defense Department's Combating Terrorism Technology Support Office has begun a Human, Social, and Cultural Behavior Modeling project, [2] and the Pentagon has recently announced the Minerva project, which seeks to "embrace eggheads and ideas" and "recruit social scientists and direct the nation's brainpower to combating security threats like the Chinese military, Iraq, terrorism and religious fundamentalism."[3]

The above mentioned projects explicitly seek the advice and input of political and other social scientists that use mathematical theoretical models, statistical tools to test hypotheses, and advanced computing resources to collect and analyze data. Many scholars and policy makers are unaware that this represents a renaissance of a similar moment in the 1970s.[4] Will this renaissance experience the same fate as its predecessor, or is there reason to believe that the scholarly community has more to offer policy makers today than we did in the 1970s? We argue that there is considerable cause for optimism and make our case by describing an important shift in the conceptual and theoretical orientation scholars are taking toward the study of dissent, repression, terror, and violent conflict within countries.

This essay emphasizes two criticisms with regard to the literature on terrorism and violent political conflict – specifically the quantitative conflict literature. First, this essay takes issue with the dominant structural and systems-oriented theoretical approaches to studying terrorism and political conflict and instead advocates an actors-based process approach to studying such phenomena. Studies of the former category emphasize specific country-attributes such as under-developed economies, the lack of democratic political outlets, and higher levels of ethnic fractionalization, that have been associated with higher levels of political conflict. Yet, many of these variables change very little over time making it difficult to explain variations in levels of violence from one point in time to the next. The approach advocated here argues that actors' decisions are based on the decisions of their opponents and this strategic inter-dependence can more effectively explain conflict processes. Second, this essay calls for more quantitative studies of terrorism to treat terror as a tactical choice within a framework of other violent and cooperative actions. Future work should model the interaction between state and non-state actors' tactical choices (and vice-versa). Most of the previous literature treats terrorism separately from other violent political tactics and considers it as a distinct area of inquiry. More recently, other scholars have even gone further treating "suicide terror" separately from other terrorist and non-terrorist tactics (e.g., Bloom 2005, Pape 2005). Yet, terrorist tactics are often utilized within an array of other violent, non-violent, and cooperative means. This essay emphasizes that the study of terrorism should not be segregated from the larger study of political conflict and instead argues that studies focused on explanations of terror should be discussed within the broader field of contentious politics.

Structure v. Process

One way to study violent political conflict and terrorism within countries is to focus on the structural

conditions that impact the chance that a country will experience such phenomena. Another way is to analyze the behavioral relationships among parties to potential conflicts, how they make decisions, how such decisions impact other parties' decisions, and how the sequences of behavioral interactions escalate and de-escalate across various thresholds of violent political conflict. Or, as Harry Eckstein put it over 25 years ago, we can distinguish between "contingency" and "inherency" approaches to the study of violent conflict.[5] The first perspective assumes that conflict is contingent on unusual or irregular conditions that cause disruptions in conventional politics. The contingent approach leads one to study the political, economic, and social attributes of countries to explain variation in their conflict experiences. The inherent perspective assumes that violent political conflict emerges out of low-level contentious interactions among a set of political players. This approach leads researchers to focus on the conditional behavior of parties to conflict and how that behavior changes over time. While Eckstein laid out these two approaches in 1980, the past 25 years have borne witness to few scholars taking the latter path.

Prior to the turn of the century, the study of intrastate conflict was much more focused on the former approach than the latter. While studying the political, economic, and social attributes of countries is a useful approach for understanding and highlighting general patterns of conflict, it is ill-suited to address conflict processes because such approaches "are essentially static 'input-output' or 'stimulus-response' type models, not dynamic models of interaction."[6] Charles Tilly argues that because "collective action is dynamic… its outcomes depend very strongly on the course of interaction."[7]

A recent wave of scholarship turns its back on the structural attributes approach and instead focuses attention on the escalation and de-escalation processes of political conflict instantiated by actors' strategic behavioral interactions.[8] A common thread running through this new generation of conflict scholarship is a shift from countries as the unit of analysis to the parties to the conflict and their behavior. This work focuses on competition between governments and various dissident groups over policy, control of the state, and—especially—the support of the population.

This shift is critically important because it means that theory becomes much more useful to policy makers: the emphasis on parties to the conflict leads this research to develop hypotheses about the conflictual behavior of dissidents in response to government behavior and vice versa. By moving away from thinking about the impact of democratic v. autocratic institutions, the size of GNP/capita, and the ethnic composition of society these scholars have begun to ask the following sorts of questions:

When does repression work? When does it backfire?
Why are some dissident groups so much more violent than others?
What explains varying levels of discrimination in targeting across time and space?
What event sequences lead to conflict escalation?
What are the effects of government countermeasures on the tactical choices of dissidents?
What explains the ebb and flow of government-dissident behavioral exchanges?
What event sequences lead to negotiated peaceful settlements?
Why can factions spoil a peace process?

Note that information about political institutions, economic output, and ethnic composition are of limited usefulness for answering these questions. Why? Because those characteristics of the country in which these conflicts unfold *do not change much over time*. To the extent that they change, they change rather slowly. As one recent paper put it "the factors analyzed in country level analyses are the same for a given country during war and peace, and are therefore incapable of predicting shifts from one period to the other."[9] To better understand such conflict processes, we must study the behavior of the parties to the conflict. And if we are going to study behavior, then it is surely reasonable to study it as purposive, strategic behavior that varies systematically in response to the behavior of other parties to the conflict.

To be sure, we have learned from the structural approach that characteristics of the state such as regime type, the economy, terrain, capabilities, and demographics like population and ethnicity are correlated with the level of political conflict we observe *across countries*. However, the structural attributes approach has not taught us much about conflict processes as they unfold *over time within specific countries*. For example, we know that a country with mountainous regions is more likely to experience an insurgency. Yet, knowing that El Salvador is mountainous tells us little about when we are likely to observe peace or conflict in El Salvador as those mountains change very little over time.

That said, we are not arguing that we should throw the baby out with the bathwater. Rather, the best scholarship should situate behavioral studies of conflict processes within a structural framework. And this is precisely what we see in recent studies.[10]

This essay argues that the renaissance of the policy community's interest in the scientific study of conflict is more likely to bear fruit than its predecessor because the scholarly community is conceptually and theoretically better prepared to make a contribution to the questions policymakers want answered. The shift away from the study of the correlation of national aggregates toward the study of the behavior of dissidents and states within the context of national aggregates has led to a theoretical emphasis on the strategic behavior of governments, dissident groups, and members of the population. This approach lends itself well to studying the propensity and frequency of terror attacks committed by state and non-state actors. In addition to these new theoretical tools, exciting new data tools and statistical models have been created for the express purpose of facilitating the testing of the hypotheses implied by the new theories. We briefly describe these new developments, emphasizing what we have learned about violent dissent.

Disaggregating Violent Political Conflict

To begin, the new school points out that political conflict is *not* best characterized as something that countries catch (or experience): the implicit epidemiological analogy is passé. Instead the new generation of scholarship recognizes that governments often face multiple challengers fighting for the same cause and/or very different causes, and that these challenges vary across both space and time. As such, these theorists have been disaggregating the study of civil conflict across actors, tactics, space and time.

Civil conflicts often involve infighting among members or branches of the government (e.g., military coups in Nigeria) and often yield dissident group splits (e.g., the Moro Islamic Liberation Front emerged out of the Moro National Liberation Front). In other cases, multiple groups may interact with each other and even form alliances or coalitions (e.g., the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea – comprised by the Khmer Rouge, FUNCINPEC and KPLNF). Further, governments and dissident groups compete for the support of the public. Stathis Kalyvas' recent book makes the importance of distinguishing among the government, the dissidents, and the public abundantly clear: he observes that death tolls in civil wars vary systematically depending on whether either the dissidents or the government can exercise authority over the town or whether the territory is actively contested by dissident and government troops.[11] Other research has disaggregated actors and their behavior to demonstrate that both diplomatic and military intervention by third countries on behalf of dissidents or governments can have strong bearing on pushing parties to the table or escalating violent activity.[12] In sum, intrastate conflict is comprised of many different parties with different motivations, who make a variety of decisions as to how to behave in both the short and long run. To answer questions like the ones listed above we need to adopt a disaggregated unit of analysis and account for the behavior of these different parties.

Second, much of the scholarship to date has focused on particular tactics or events such as terror attacks, protests, war, militarized interstate disputes, negotiations, or treaties. By adopting a particular-

istic conceptualization of conflict behavior, we ignore the full underlying dimension of state and non-state actors' behavior (Moore 2006) and fail to distinguish among the various actions available in an actor's choice set. For example, if behavior such as hostile rhetoric, guerrilla attacks, cease fires, and peace talks have a non-trivial effect on the probability of a terrorist event occurring and co-vary positively with independent variables used to explain terrorist events, then relationships reported in the terrorism literature are biased.[13] Aside from the bias introduced into empirical models of terrorism, the narrow focus on terrorist events and the desire to explain them alone without examining how other forms of behavior effect and intertwine with such events causes scholars to narrowly theorize about the behavior of insurgents, rebels, separatists, etc. Thus, a focus exclusively on terrorism has both negative theoretical and empirical consequences. As Moore (2006) puts it elsewhere, "Conceptualization matters; it influences our research agendas; it influences the questions we ask, and, ultimately, the policy implications we produce." At the present, political violence, nonviolence, diplomacy, accommodation, and terrorism are often treated as separate domains of inquiry, yet such phenomenon are clearly connected and intertwined. They are often tactical substitutes for state and non-state actors engaged in political struggles. Making such connections should spawn new theories yielding larger explanations than extant theories. To analyze conflict processes effectively, we need to conceptualize the choices and choice sets of state and non-state actors more holistically.

Third, civil conflicts rarely span an entire country's territory. Rather, they are often confined to sub-national regions based on certain geographic features that generate conditions favorable for conflict. Teams of researchers are making considerable progress pursuing this seemingly obvious point.[14] For example, mountains or jungle provide cover for rebels to hide and wage guerilla campaigns. Resource rich zones abundant in minerals (e.g., diamonds) or other valuables (oil, etc.) may also contribute to reoccurring conflict.[15] Motives may also determine conflict locations. For example, recent research claims that separatist groups tend to fight away from the capital in order to make their territory autonomous, whereas insurgents aiming to overthrow the state tend to fight nearer to the source of the power – in the capital city or province where the capital is located.[16] Moreover, international borders can often provide refuge from governmental control, and this may cause conflict events to cluster near international boundaries which, in turn, can have important implications for neighboring countries.[17] The general point is this: if we wish to investigate theories that have a geographic element we need to abandon the country level of analysis in favor of a disaggregated spatial approach. Importantly, doing so will produce research with far more rich policy implications than we have seen prior to the emergence of this new generation of research.

Fourth, the unit of time over which one aggregates is consequential.[18] Until recently most research has focused on the year as the unit of temporal aggregation. Marcellino explains that "temporal aggregation arises when the frequency of data generation is lower than that of data collection so that not all the realizations of the stochastic process… are observable."[19] Yearly aggregation obscures the actions and reactions of actors who respond to one another in much smaller units of time such as monthly, weekly, or even daily intervals. At what temporal units do dissidents and governments respond to one another? Surely the answer is: it varies. But just as surely the answer is *not*: annually! To focus on the kinds of questions that the new generation of civil conflict scholars is asking requires that we abandon annually aggregated data in favor of data collected over the unit of time in which they occur. In the next section we briefly describe the exciting data collection revolution that is taking place and making possible the renaissance we are seeing as Washington engages the scientific study of violent political conflict.

The Events Data Revolution

In the mid 1990s Phil Schrodt revolutionized the collection of events data when he released the Kansas Events Data System KEDS computer program.[20] This program demonstrated that it is possible to use computers to code news reports to generate data about the behavior of dissidents toward governments, governments toward dissidents, government toward other governments, etc. Over the past

15 years the KEDS project has spawned a number of similar projects, and this technology has spilled over into a variety of other areas of political science as well.[21] Where hundreds of hours of human labor were required to code such reports computers are able to produce such data in mere minutes. This has radically changed the information that is available to scholars. Further, the shift in conceptual and theoretical interests described above demand just such data. To illustrate, we briefly describe Project Civil Strife (PCS), which is directed by the second author of this essay.

Project Civil Strife uses computerized coding technology to generate disaggregated data useful for testing the hypotheses advanced by the new generation of intrastate conflict researchers.[22] The project directly confronts actor, tactical, spatial, and temporal aggregation head on by collecting information on multiple actors' behavioral interactions each day in various geographic locations. With respect to actors, PCS codes the behavior of just about any dissident or government group discussed in open source media reports. It codes individual's names and offices and even tracks individuals like Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia who at different times of the conflict served as a government official and then as a rebel leader. By disaggregating the state and the social and dissident actors, scholars and policy makers can examine interactions among multiple parties as depicted in Figure 1.
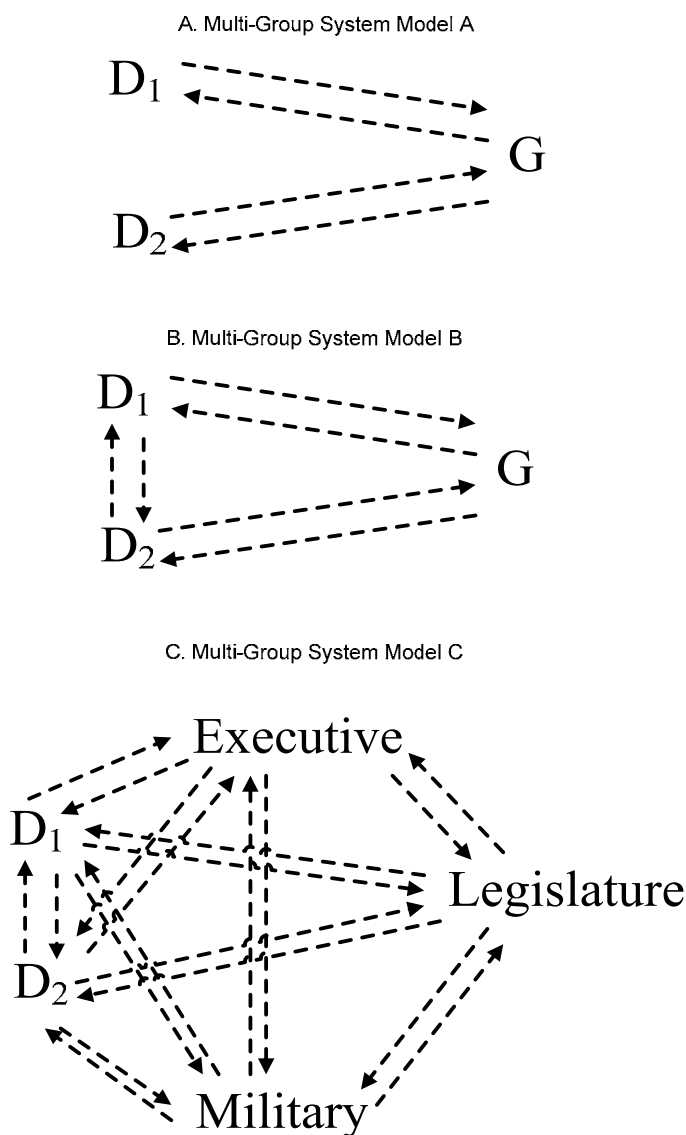

Figure 1: Possible Multi-Actor Models of Intrastate Conflict

Figure 1A and 1B shows how one might go about constructing a model of the conflict processes be-
tween two rebel groups and the state (e.g., Democratic Kampuchea and the KPLNF in Cambodia).
The first can help uncover different processes at work between the government and group 1 and the
government and group 2. The second shows how the relationship between Group 1 and Group 2
might affect the relationships between the state and each group or how the relationship between the
state and each group might affect the relationship between the two groups themselves. Figure 1C il-
lustrates the potential relationships one could uncover by breaking up the government into its princi-
ple component parts. Such a model might be particularly useful in Pakistan, Chile, and/or Nigeria
where the government and the military have competed in the past with each other.

Moreover, the project employs several different coding ontologies to disaggregate tactics and events.
The project primarily uses the CAMEO and WEIS event codes to capture the various actions taking
place by myriad actors in various places.[23]

With respect to spatial disaggregation, PCS also tracks the behavior of actors across disaggregated
space. Figure 2 depicts a map of Cambodia and highlights the frequency of violent events (use of
force, bombings, ambushes, etc.) across different regions. The two most populated regions in terms
of conflict events include Phnom Penh and Pailin. Of course Phnom Penh is the capital of Cambodia
and the central location of the government, while Pailin was a major stronghold and resource center
for the Khmer Rouge. Pailin was an area rich in gem stones that was mined to fund the rebels. The
preliminary spatial plot supports other findings in the literature. For example, conflict takes place in
resource rich areas and in the mountains (Pailin and Kampot). Moreover, the abundance of conflict
events seems to be greater near the Vietnam border (Prey Veaeng, Sbaay Rieng, Kampong Chaam,
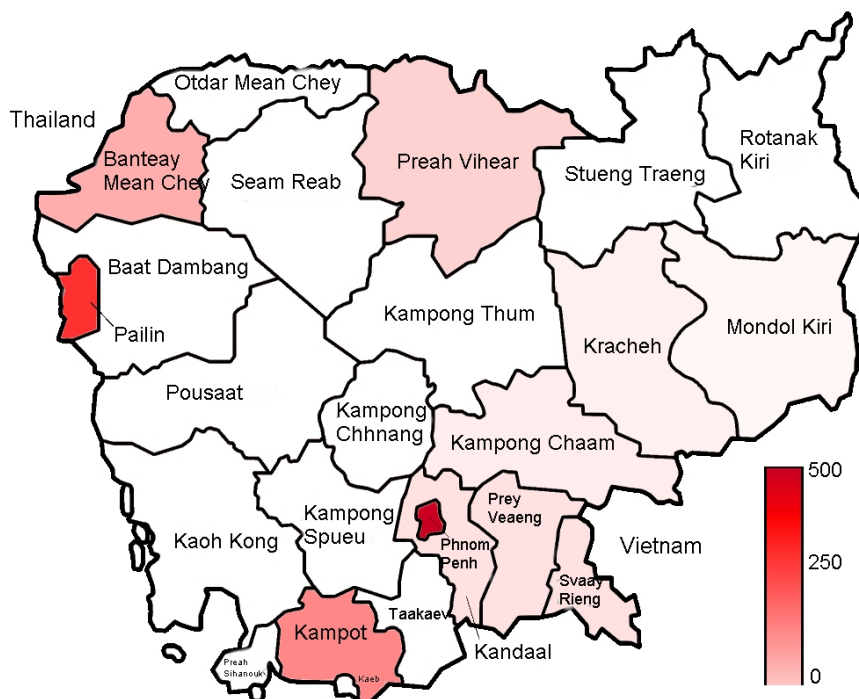and Kracheh).

Figure 2. Regional Disaggregation of All Conflict Events Identified, 1980-2004

To summarize, the PCS data can be used to study multiple-party interactions over disaggregated time
and space. By doing so it encourages researchers to address the types of questions identified above
by studying the behavior of parties to intrastate conflicts. For example, PCS puts terrorism in the

context of other violent, non-violent, and cooperative tactics such that we can theorize and empirically model a more holistic conceptualization of political behavior.[24] Such a conceptualization reduces bias and yields theories that explain more than their predecessors. It also allows for the examination of how low intensity conflict escalates into "civil war".[25] In sum the project and others like it bring together process oriented theories, holistic conceptualizations of tactical choices, and disaggregated data to better understand the causes and consequences of violent political conflict.

Conclusion

Paul Collier's influential World Bank project on the co-variates of civil war is an archetypical example of the structural attributes approach to the conceptualization and analysis of violent political conflict.[26] We find it instructive that the final product from that project abandoned the structural attributes approach in favor of case studies that focused attention on historical description of the behavior of the parties to the conflict.[27] Sidney Tarrow argues that this shift from the statistical analysis of structural aggregates organized in country-year data containers to descriptive-historical analyses of cases demonstrates the weakness of large-N data analysis: it can illuminate a little bit, but to really understand conflict processes we must engage in descriptive case studies.[28] While this essay shares Tarrow's concerns about the weakness of the structural aggregates approach to the study of violent political conflict, it also demonstrates the poverty of Tarrow's diagnosis: the weakness is not inherent in its methodological choices for hypothesis testing. Rather, it is a conceptual weakness about the units of analysis one chooses. One irony of Tarrow's essay is that he also reviews some of the new generation scholarship we celebrate here. Yet, rather than recognize its value for having abandoned the overly-aggregated country-year in favor of a focus on the behavior of parties to the conflicts within the context of institutions, economies, and societies, Tarrow flogs the dying horse of his generation's intellectual battleground: the so-called qualitative—quantitative divide that grew out of the behavioral revolution in political science.

Fortunately, a growing number of policy analysts in Washington are disinterested in these academic "tempests in a teapot" and recognize the potential value in leveraging the new school's insights to inform policy makers. This renaissance is welcome and it will be interesting to see how it unfolds. Political scientists are on the cusp of being able to say very interesting things about the violent behavior of dissidents and governments as the outcome of dynamic processes that vary over time and space across the countries in which such conflicts take place. We invite the reader to stay tuned.

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NOTES:

[1] D.C. Esty, J. Goldstone, T.R. Gurr, B. Harff, P.T. Surko, A.N. Unger, and R. Chen. "The State Failure Project: Early Warning Research for US Foreign Policy Planning." Preventive Measures: Building Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems. 1988, Vol. xx, pp. 27-38.

[2] Office of the Secretary of Defense. Broad Agency Announcement 08-Q-3028 Packet, available online at: https://www.bids.tswg.gov/tswg/bids.nsf/DownloadBAAs?OpenView.

[3] See http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/arts/18minerva.html?_r=2&8dpc&oref=slogin&oref=slogin for the story and http://www.arl.army.mil/www/DownloadedInternetPages/CurrentPages/DoingBusinesswithARL/research/08-R-0007.pdf for the announcement.

[4] SJ Andriole and GW Hopple. "The Rise and Fall of Event Data: From Basic Research to Applied Use in the US Department Of Defense." International Interactions, 1984. Vol. 11, pp. 293-309.

[5] Harry Eckstein. "Theoretical Approaches to Explaining Collective Political Violence." In T.R. Gurr (ed.) Handbook of Political Conflict, pp. 135-166. 1980. New York: The Free Press.

[6] Will H. Moore. "Action-Reaction or Rational Expectations? Reciprocity and the Domestic-International Conflict Nexus During the 'Rhodesia Problem'." Journal of Conflict Resolution. 1995. Vol. 39, No. 1, p.132.

[7] Charles Tilly. "Models and Realities of Popular Collective Action." Social Research. 1985. Vol. 52, No. 4, p. 1.

[8] Recent reviews of this literature can be found in Christian Davenport. "State Repression and Political Order." Annual Review of Political Science. 2007. Vol. 10, pp. 1–23, and Mark I. Lichbach. "Internal Wars Over the State: Rational-Choice Institutionalism and Contentious Politics." M.I. Midlarsky (ed.) Handbook of War Studies, Volume III. Forthcoming. University of Michigan Press.

[9] C. Butler, S. Gates and M. Leiby. "To Fight or Not to Fight: Contest Success Functions and Civil Conflict." Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting. 2005. P. 18. See, also, Will H. Moore, Ronny Lindström and Valerie O'Regan. "Land Reform, Political Violence, and the Economic Inequality—Political Violence Nexus: A Longitudinal Analysis." International Interactions. 1996. Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 335-363.

[10] For example, see MaCartan Humphreys. "Natural Resources, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution: Uncovering the Mechanisms." Journal of Conflict Resolution. 2005. Vol. 49, Num. 4, pp. 508-537; Stathis Kalyvas. The Logic of Violence in Civil War. 2006. New York: Cambridge University Press; and Jeremy Weinstein. Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence. 2007. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[11] Kalyvvas, 2006, op cit.

[12] Moore, 1995, op cit; Will H. Moore and David R. Davis. "Ties That Bind? Domestic and International Conflict Behavior in Zaire." Comparative Political Studies. 1998. Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 45-71; Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Kyle Beardsley. "Nosy Neighbors." Journal of Conflict Resolution. 2004. Vol. 48, No. 3, 379-402; and Clayton L. Thyne. "Cheap Signals with Costly Consequences: The Effect of Interstate Relations on Civil War." Journal of Conflict Resolution. 2006. Vol. 50, No. 6, pp. 937-961.

[13] Moore (2006, 10) makes a similar argument about studying war only

[14] See the Conference on "Disaggregating the Study of Civil War and Transnational Violence." University of California, San Diego, 2005. Program available online at: http://weber.ucsd.edu/~kgledits/igcc/dscwtv/dscwtv_prog.pdf and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project at the Center for the Study of Civil War, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Available online at: http://new.prio.no/CSCW-Datasets/Data-on-Armed-Conflict/ACLED---Armed-Conflict-Location-and-Event-Data/.

[15] See Humphreys, 2005, op cit. and Michael Ross. "A Closer Look At Oil, Diamonds, And Civil War." Annual Review of Political Science. 2006. Vol. 9, pp. 265-300.

[16] See Halvard Buhaug and Scott Gates. "The Geography of Civil War." Journal of Peace Research. 2002. Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 417-433, Halvard Buhaug and Päivi Lujala. "Accounting for scale: Measuring geography in quantitative studies of civil war." Political Geography. Vol. 24, No. 4, May 2005, pp. 399-418, and Jan Ketil Rød and Halvard Buhaug. "Using disaggregated grid cells for a study on the onset of African Civil Wars." 2007. Working Paper available online at: http://www.icr.ethz.ch/mccw/papers/rod.pdf.

[17] Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. "Refugees and the Spread of Civil War." International Organization. 2006. Vol. 60, No. 2, pp. 335-366.

[18] Pitirim Sorokin. Social and Cultural Dynamics: Fluctuation of Social Relationships, War, and Revolution, Volume 3, 1937, New York: American Book Company, pp. 383-408, and Stephen M. Shellman. "Time Series Intervals and Statistical Inference: The Effects of Temporal Aggregation on Event Data Analysis." Political Analysis. 2004. Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 97-104.

[19] Massimiliano Marcellino. "Some Consequences of Temporal Aggregation in Empirical Analysis.'' Journal of Business and Economic Statistics. 1999. Vol. 17, p. 129.

[20] Philip A. Schrodt, Shannon G. Davis and Judith L. Weddle. "Political Science: KEDS—A Program for the Machine Coding of Event Data." Social Science Computer Review. 1994. Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 561-587.

[21] See, for example, Paul Pennings and Hans Keman. "Towards a New Methodology of Estimating Party Policy Positions." Quality and Quantity. 2002. Vol 36, No. 1, pp. 55-79, and Burt L. Monroe, Kevin Quinn, Michael Colaresi, Dragomir Radev, Steven Abney, Michael Crespin, Yael Shomer, Akitaka Matsuo and Sarah Hobolt The Dynamics of Political Rhetoric and Political Representation. Poster presented at the 2007 Human and Social Dynamics meeting, National Science Foundation. Available online at: http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/hsd/2007.pdf, pp. 195-196.

[22] Internet links will be provided for the project, papers, publications, etc if published.

[23] See http://web.ku.edu/keds/data.dir/KEDS.WEIS.Codes.html for WEIS codes and http://web.ku.edu/keds/cameo.dir/CAMEO.SCALE.txt for the CAMEO scale.

[24] Author citation – deleted for anonymity.

[25] Andrew M. Reeves and Brandon M. Stewart. "Forecasting Escalation in Civil War: A Quantitative Case Study of the Aceh Conflict in Indonesia." Prepared for the 2007 Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association. Available online at: http://www.uga.edu/terrorismlab/documents/reeves_stewart_forecasting_escalation_civil_war.pdf.

[26] Paul Collier. Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. 2000, and Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler. "Greed and grievance in civil war." Oxford Economic Papers, 2004. Vol. 56, pp. 563-595.

[27] Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis. Volumes I and II. Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis, Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publications. 2005.

[28] Sidney Tarrow. "Inside Insurgencies: Politics and Violence in an Age of Civil War." Perspectives in Politics. 2007. Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 587-600.

Operation Praline:
The Realization of Al-Suri's Nizam, la Tanzim?

By Raffaello Pantucci

This article will attempt to show how a recent plot in the United Kingdom, known by its police codename Operation Praline[1], and the broader international conspiracy that supported the group responsible may constitute an organic evolution of terrorist networks towards al-Qaeda "architect" Abu Musab al-Suri's nizam la tanzim – "a system, not secret organization."[2] This is not to conclude that Aabid Khan and his broader network were necessarily purposefully moulding themselves in this direction – as the author has not seen evidence supporting this assertion – but rather this article attempts to show how al-Suri's framework for global jihad offers a good prism through which to analyse this group since they would appear to have developed in broad accordance with al-Suri's principles, whether wittingly or no.

System, Not Organization

Abu Musab al-Suri, also known as Mustafa Sethmariam Nasar, is currently being held in American custody in an unspecified location. Since he was arrested in Quetta, Pakistan in late October 2005[3] and was handed over into American custody he has dropped off the grid. It has been speculated that he may have been one of the "ghost prisoners" held at some point on Diego Garcia,[4] but since then his whereabouts have been unknown. His most enduring legacy, however, is as the author of the Global Islamic Resistance Call, a 1600-page online magnum opus which draws on his own experiences as a long-time global mujahedeen to create a "military theory" for the "global Islamic resistance." This theory is encapsulated by his oft repeated catch-phrase, "system, not organization" which alludes to the highly decentralized form of globalized resistance that he proposes as a future outline of how al-Qaeda should fight around the world. As Lia puts it, "Al-Suri's grand vision was to mobilise the masses around the banner of jihad, to ignite Fallujah-type insurrections in every Crusader country, a global Intifada whose fighters should train, equip, and fight on their own."[5]

What is most crucial for this paper's analysis, however, is the vision through which al-Suri planned to achieve this. He aimed for this global jihad to be fought by "small resistance units" which would be scattered around the globe that would pursue jihad "totally separated from each other."[6] Each unit should be as autonomous as possible, with an individual "emir" and overall they should share little more than a "common aim, the common name, a program of beliefs and a method of education."[7] Structurally speaking, he sees three main types of units as central in developing this struggle: Building Units (which translates into being a leadership unit), Operative Units (which are as they sound), and Secret Agitation Units (essentially a media and communications unit) – with each cell in the overall jihad falling into one of these categories.

The mission of the Building Unit is to spread the ideas and ideology of the organization, convince cadres to fight, and help with all aspects of indoctrination, training and funding. In essence this is a leadership unit which one can interpret as the focal point of the resistance – so for al-Suri's thinking, the main such entity in the global jihad to fulfil this function would be the al-Qaeda core in Pakistan's lawless provinces. The Operation Units are instead more obviously cells that are intended to be those that carry out the attacks. Al-Suri specifies that they should move into action almost as soon as they have been activated by the Building Unit, and he is quite specific that for operational security reasons, they should not expand to greater than between five to ten members. Finally, the Secret Agitation Units are defined as needing to be very small units of no more than one to three elements, with religious, media, ideological and communication experience. He specifies that they need to have

"experience in using the Internet and communication equipment" and an ability to translate "works and communiqués" into languages of all Muslims. In the cases of all units, al-Suri repeats a mantra of operational security as an absolute priority, and in the case of agitation units, he places a particular emphasis on an ability to innovate.

Operation Praline and its international connections

Taking this operational framework as a backdrop, it is useful to now observe how Aabid Khan's Praline network might fit into it. However, it is helpful to first understand how Praline appeared on the authorities' radar and the broader network of plots within which Khan and his two associates were convicted. In late October 2005, police in Bosnia raided properties on the outskirts of Sarajevo and arrested two young men, Mirsad Bektasevic (a Bosnian with a Swedish passport) and Cesur Abdulkadir (a Turkish national with Danish residency) in possession of suicide vests, weapons and martyrdom videos. Analysis of Bektasevic's mobile phone provided a number of active leads for counterterror officers around the world, including one that led to London and to the son of a Moroccan diplomat, Younis Tsouli.

When police stormed Tsouli's home in Shepherd's Bush in London on October 21, 2005, they caught him in the middle of designing a website to be entitled "Youbombit" in a variation of the famous YouTube. While initially police did not realize, it later emerged through careful analysis of Tsouli's computer that he was in fact the notorious online jihadist Irhabi007 (terrorist007) who had long taunted the world through his active support for online extremists around the world. As well as helping place videos online from groups like al-Qaeda in Iraq, Tsouli was instrumental in designing online magazines, logos, translating materials and also providing online training courses for other extremists to learn how to hack and hide materials online. One of his co-conspirators, Tariq al-Daour, was allegedly the "money man" of the plot and police found some 37,000 credit card details on his computer hard drive at the time of arrest. This money helped fund Tsouli's activities and allowed him to continue to purchase the internet real estate he used to disseminate extremist material online.

In addition, Tsouli's computer provided police with a wealth of access to websites and password-protected areas. Tsouli, his conspirators and Khan shared managing rights to an extremist website called At-Tibyan. This wealth of information (as well as other intelligence efforts undoubtedly) opened them up to a network that spread from Aabid Khan and his cell in Bradford, England to Scotland and a young Scottish-Muslim, Mohammed Atif Siddique, who was arrested as he attempted to board a plane to Pakistan to seek jihadist training and who developed websites aimed at helping terrorists. Closer to home, Tsouli's "buddy list" on his computer led to Yassin Nassari, who was arrested in May 2006 at Luton airport and charged with possessing documents useful to a terrorist (including the blue prints for how to design Qassam rockets).

Further afield, it emerged that there were connections through some of these individuals to groups in Ontario, Canada and Georgia, USA, with others possibly extant but not currently known. Video footage shot in Washington that appeared to be reconnaissance of possible targets was found on Tsouli's computer and was later revealed to have been taken by Syed Haris Ahmed and Ehusanul Islam Sadequee. In Canada, the trail led security services there to arrest a group now known as the Toronto 17, who are currently standing trial and it is claimed ran training camps and planned a wide variety of (unexecuted) attacks, including massive explosions and the public beheading of Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In March 2005, Ahmed and Sadequee visited Toronto; it is believed that they then met with some of the Toronto plotters.

However, from transcripts and analysis that have emerged from the Praline case in the UK, it would seem as though the focal point of this network was Northern England and Aabid Khan. Khan acted as the global emir for the group, instructing individuals and recruiting new members, as well as being the link between the group and Pakistani based terrorist groups Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-

Mohammed (JeM). He is known to have visited Pakistan a couple of times, on one occasion travelling deep into the North West Frontier Provinces into areas known to be friendly to both groups (where he shot footage of himself and other American-sounding individuals in an area where LeT posters were prominently displayed on public walls).

Khan's plans for the group are not completely known, in part as it is suspected that information linked to other trials is likely outside the public domain. However, it seems as though he wanted to gather a team of "6-12 brothers" in Toronto, where they would prepare and then travel to Pakistan to train for jihad. Through the sister-in-law of one of the Canadian plotters, whom Khan referred to on the stand as his "wife" and with whom it has been shown he had long and intense conversations with online, he apparently hoped to identify women who could pose as wives for "the brothers" to facilitate their transit to Pakistan. Khan was also discovered to have apparently carried out surveillance of security transit vans in the UK and on the stand he mysteriously alluded to the technical capabilities of such a vehicle to act as an independent command and control vehicle.

Praline as the Building Unit

The running theme through all these plots is two-fold: the internet and Aabid Khan (a possible third is the relative youth of all of those involved, but this will be covered later). While the network was first opened up through Tsouli, it is clear that Khan was the main manager and focal point of the group – though it is unclear to what degree he was directing Tsouli's cell's work or whether they simply worked in parallel. Nonetheless, we can see him fulfilling the "Building Unit" role in al-Suri's imagined network – he provided the plotters with direction and plans, he sought and recruited new members (both online and off), and he provided the all important connection back to groups sympathetic to al-Qaeda in Pakistan. There has been no evidence thus far that Khan was connected to al-Qaeda, but on the stand he stated that he had connections to both LeT and JeM, and online chats show the group undecided over whether to connect and train with either LeT or JeM in Pakistan. Within this context it is worth mentioning that the Georgia cell was charged with providing material support for a designated foreign terrorist organization, which was identified as LeT.

From his central point, Khan identified individuals and helped push them along the radicalization trajectory, and in some cases, as in Mohammed Atif Siddique's, got them to go seek terrorist training in Pakistan. In other cases, as in the Georgia duo, he got them to prove themselves to the group by going to Washington to shoot the reconnaissance footage that was later found on Tsouli's computer. He also travelled to oversee and connect with other plotters, including a trip in March 2005 to Canada to meet with the group and his online "wife," and it is believed that one of the Georgia cell members may have travelled to Pakistan to meet with him on one of his trips there. As Karen Jones of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) put it, "Khan was very much the "Mr Fix-it" of the group"[8] providing his Bradford cell with connections and radical material (his trial was referred to in the press as the "encyclopaedia of jihad" case) – a nickname which would be equally apt for his global role. To return to al-Suri's analysis, Khan's cell clearly provided leadership, ideology, training, inspiration, direction, and possibly even helped with fundraising to help various cells establish themselves – though the funding aspect of the network is unclear.

Tsouli as the Agitation Unit

Remaining at this level of analysis, it is therefore useful to consider Younis Tsouli and his cell (known by their police codename "Mazhar"), as the Secret Agitation Unit to which al-Suri refers. From his home in Shepherds Bush, Tsouli and his co-conspirators al-Daour and Waseem Mughal (some of whom had never met in person before they were arrested), acted as a global media cell for al-Qaeda, and in particular al-Qaeda in Iraq. They provided websites, hacking information and an ability for extremist material to be distributed and hidden online, translation, as well as helping design logos, magazines and other supportive materials for al-Qaeda.

While it may have been Tsouli who first provided police with an avenue into the network, it seems subsequently clear that his role in the network was focused on the internet and communications. In this way, he can be described as fulfilling the role of al-Suri's Secret Agitation Unit, fulfilling its mission "to spread the Call and redistribute its literature, its research studies, and its various programmes by clandestine means."[9] Tsouli helped complete their mission of "translating the works and communiqués of the Resistance" both by directly translating things himself, but also by cracking Arabic language software and placing it in online forums for public use by others.

The Operative Units

Broadly speaking, one could group the other plotters and cells within the network as the various Operative Units which al-Suri refers to at different stages of preparation – though it is unlikely that they were all as subservient to Khan as this might suggest. Of them, the Toronto group offers itself as the clearest example of an Operative Unit that was "moving directly to action" with evidence pointing to a group equipped with bomb-making materials including some three metric tonnes of ammonium nitrate. Subsequently, footage has been leaked which seems to show the group training in Canada's empty spaces, with images of them running around overlaid with nasheeds (Islamic songs) typical of extremist online footage.

While it would appear that Khan's intentions were to bring the group together, he also seems to have been willing to push other Operative Units forwards on their own – one example being Mohammed Atif Siddique, who may simply have been going to Pakistan to train, but he may also have been being moved into a more operational role there. Similarly, some of the evidence in Khan's trial, including the fact that he was seeking to purchase some fuses for fireworks and he had looked into purchasing acetone (a precursor to hydrogen peroxide, an increasingly common explosive in British plots). It also remains unclear why he was scoping out Securicor vans, though some evidence which emerged from the trial seemed to point to Khan plotting in a more direct way than simply leading and radicalizing the broader group. In terms that al-Suri would likely have commended, a page of Khan's diary contained a list: "1 cell stake out target; 1 cell acquire equipment; 1 cell mount the attack." While al-Suri is keen to designate each group a role (Building, Operative or Secret Agitation), it would fit with his structure that each cell would be actively planning direct jihad while also carrying out their other designated duties.

In other ways, however, al-Suri would likely have been very disappointed by the group – while the network's broad structure would fit al-Suri's framework, the fact that they gathered and met a number of times exposed them to possible compromise. Similarly, the size of the Toronto group was clearly beyond the size that al-Suri would have wanted, and the fact that the group was compromised by an informant would seem to support al-Suri's logic. Finally, the fact that the network was initially cracked through something as basic as mobile phone memory exposes the importance of rigorous isolation.

Purposely nizam la tanzim?

None of this of course proves that Khan and his broader network modelled themselves purposely on Abu Musab al-Suri's writings. While it is likely that some of al-Suri's writings might have been amongst their possession, it is hard to know what sort of a direct impact they actually had on their operational planning and activities. What is interesting, however, is to consider this broader network within the framework of understanding that is provided by al-Suri's plan for the Global Resistance. In many ways, al-Suri's vision of a global jihad characterized by many independent cells is one that seems a natural evolution of any globalized scattered resistance movement. What is interesting about the Praline network is that it would seem to fit into al-Suri's analysis in such a convenient way, suggesting that the structure he has laid out offers a good prism with which to consider current and fu-

ture international jihadist networks. The particular emphasis within this plot of the internet and its central role in bringing the cells together points to the growing threat posed by the medium as a terrorist tool, but it might also offer security services a better understanding of how to appreciate and analyze terrorist use of the internet and the different roles played by individuals online.

Within the context of this relatively novel technology (insomuch as one can still consider the internet new), it is also worth mentioning the youth of all of the cells involved, which included a number of teenagers, including Hammaad Munshi who was arrested and charged with Khan at the young age of 16 – a new record in British counter-terrorism terms.[10] The youth and tech-savvy of the group was most vividly emphasized when Justice Peter Openshaw stopped proceedings in Younis Tsouli et al's case to ask for clarification about some of the terms being used, stating, "the trouble is I don't understand the language. I don't really understand what a website is."[11] Justice Openshaw may be something of an exceptional case, but nonetheless, the ease with which younger generations use the internet and its growing centrality in citizens' daily lives all points to a clear need for counter-terrorism officers to be well conversant with online extremism. This also further points to a possible evolution in terrorism that is only likely to become more pronounced as time progresses.

The counterpoint to this youth question, however, is the consequent relative inexperience and inefficiency that the group also display. In part this is shown in some of their actions, but it also raises the adjacent question of whether the internet is really as useful a tool in such planning as was previously thought. It may provide very disparate groups with an ability to connect and develop plots together, but it also likely leaves some electronic trail which provides an all-important link for counter-terrorism police to target and links groups and individuals to terrorist activity who might otherwise not have been on security services radars. To return to al-Suri, this also raises the question of how realistic it is that completely discrete cells might exist – though again, the aforementioned operational security breaches that this group indulged in mean that from this perspective it might be hard to find flaws in al-Suri's logic through this group.

Finally, a caveat must be included that this article is only true as of time of going to press – there are a number of cases outstanding in courts around the world that are connected to this network, and consequently aspects of this analysis may become redundant or be superseded by events. Similarly, Praline may prove to be an exceptional case, with future plots instead falling back into traditional patterns of individuals from the same communities going down what could be described as more traditional paths to jihad at home and abroad. Nonetheless, in the author's view, the underlying point remains that it would seem as though the currently known aspects of Praline and its broader network, and their similarity to al-Suri's definition of al-Qaeda's structure, provide a possible window of understanding into a new evolution of the terrorist threat that the West faces.

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NOTES:

[1] For a detailed overview of the Praline case, please see: "'Model' pupil secretly studied ways of wiping out non-Muslims," Yorkshire Post, 18 August 2008 – though it is worth highlighting that as with many British news stories about this group, it focuses on Hammaad Munshi who has the dubious distinction of being Britain's youngest person to be convicted on terrorism charges. Evan Kohlmann at the NEFA Foundation also offers a comprehensive overview based on Aabid Khan's testimony, "Anatomy of a Modern Homegrown Terror Cell: Aabid Khan et al." http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefaaabidkhan0908.pdf

[2] Many of the references of al-Suri's work in this text are drawn from Brynjar Lia's authoritative Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Musab al Suri, (London: Hurst, 2007).

[3[Lia, ibid., p.1.

[4] "Un 'yihadista' en el limbo," El Pais, 18 May, 2008.

[5] Lia, Ibid., p.316.

[6] Quotes from Al-Suri taken from translations in Lia, Ibid., p.373.

[7] Ibid., p.443.

[8] "Terrorist 'Mr Fix-It' convicted with two others of terrorism offenses," CPS news service, www.cps.gov.uk, 18 August, 2008.

[9] Lia, Ibid., p.449.

[10] Ultimately Munshi was only sentenced to two years incarceration, with Khan receiving much of the blame in his case, "Computer terror teenager jailed," BBC News, 19 September, 2008.
[11] "Judge: What is a website?," The Sun, 17 May, 2007.

1, 2, 3…Coup!
Of Violence, Incursions on Sovereignty and Recourses in Pakistan

By Irm Haleem

Pakistan is no stranger to military coups, as apparent from its experience in 1958, 1977 and then again in 1999 (the first two leading to military rule spanning a decade or more). The recent volatile combination of events within Pakistan has, I argue, once again brought Pakistan to the brink of military coup. Area experts such as Ayesha Jalal disagree with the likelihood of this scenario, arguing that the Pakistani military would rather leave the civilians in charge so as to leave them with the political responsibility of the consequences of their military actions in the north of Pakistan.[1] In this article, however, I argue instead that a coup is very likely impending in Pakistan. I base this assessment on the following events that seem to create a textbook formula for a military coup: the continued unauthorized US military incursions into Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) violating Pakistani sovereignty; the continued alienation of tribal populations in FATA from both the Pakistani military and civilian establishments as well as from the Americans; the unexpectedly aggressive and well organized battle that is on-going between the Pakistani army and the radicalized elements in FATA's Bajaur agency; the increasing incidences of terrorism in Pakistan and then in the country's capital no less; and the embarrassing remarks made by the new Pakistani President Asif Zardari in his recent visit to the US indicating at best his autocratic mentality and at worst his potential incompetence in leading a nuclear state. These events together may very well increase the likelihood of a military coup. A coup in such circumstance would of course be a measure of last resort to restore stability within Pakistan.

But how might one understand the abstract notion of 'restoring stability'? I argue that while a coup would not necessarily stop US incursions, nor even eliminate the extremist threat facing the Pakistani government, it might delegitimize US claims that Pakistan is not doing enough to fight terrorism within its borders and, as a result, it might lead to an alteration in the explicit nature of US interventions into Pakistani territory. This might, in turn, reduce the terrorist threat facing the Pakistani government since it would reduce the negative perceptions on the part of the extremists who view the Pakistani government as not standing up to the Americans and as, worse, tacitly approving such American incursions resulting in the deaths of their own people. The outcome of a military coup might therefore be a stabilizing of the current chaos as well as a flexing of the Pakistani military and political muscles vis-à-vis their American counterparts, a posturing so critical to the maintenance of Pakistan's regional balance of power and its international reputation.

Let us pause here and address the nature of instability in Pakistan. According to the US National Counter-Terrorism Center's annual report, incidences of terrorism on Pakistani soil have increased by 137% from 2006-2007 "with 1,335 terrorism-related fatalities [,] placing the country third in the world on such a scale…after Iraq and Afghanistan."[2] And, as the Wall Street Journal noted, "in a further sign of Pakistan's deteriorating security situation, gunmen kidnapped Afghanistan's ambassador-designate to the country and killed his driver in the main northwestern city of Peshawar [a city historically known for its secure environment]".[3] Acts of terrorism on Pakistani soil are nothing new, but while in the 1980s and 1990s these acts were rooted in sectarian hatreds of the intrastate variety, acts of terrorism in the post-2001 era have increasingly been rooted in the transnational variety of the multi-front war (anti-US and anti-Pakistani government) fought on Pakistani soil by disgruntled members of the erstwhile Taliban that fled Afghanistan into neighboring Pakistan after the US bombing of terrorist bases in Afghanistan in 2001. Not surprisingly, the epicenter of this new wave of terrorism is located in this most remote and most rural of all Pakistani territory, the so-called Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

FATA directly borders Afghanistan and is comprised of seven agencies including Bajaur and North and South Waziristan. One significance of FATA is that these areas have historically been autonomous and only nominally controlled by the Pakistani central government (and that might be too generous a statement) if only because of logistical difficulties given a sparse population spread over very steep mountainous terrain. As such, federal constitutional laws are not recognized, much less upheld, but instead it is the tribal laws that are upheld as legitimate and which govern matters. This is not to say that tribal laws equal terrorism. It should be noted that increasingly tribal elders in many of the provinces in the FATA areas are now holding town meetings against the radical justifications of violence and terrorism.[4] My point here is simply that Pakistani federal laws do not have any legitimacy in the tribal areas, thereby making tribal areas beyond the effective jurisdiction of the central government in Pakistan.

The other significance of FATA is that it is ethnically Pakhtun, the same ethnic group that comprised the erstwhile Taliban government of Afghanistan. Prior to the Pakistani government's U-turn vis-à-vis the Afghani Taliban after September 2001, the leaderships of FATA had friendly relations with the central government in Pakistan. Relations became strained thereafter due to what was perceived as the betrayal of their ethnic brethren by the Pakistani government which contributed to the radicalization of the local tribal populations, a fact that was only catalyzed by the post-2001 influx of the al-Qaeda inspired Taliban remnants from neighboring Afghanistan. The result was (and is) the fostering of both an anti-American as well as an anti-Pakistani government stand in much of the FATA.

That the remote tribal areas of FATA have become a springboard for violence and destruction within Pakistan proper is not in dispute.[5] A most recent example of this is the bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, on September 20, 2008, where over 40 people were killed and over 150 injured in the worst terrorist attack in the heart of Pakistan's capital. The "bomb contained an estimated 600 kgs of military-grade explosives as well as artillery and mortar shells [that]…left a crater 60 feet wide and 24 feet deep."[6] Most significantly, the attack is thought to have been the retaliation of the militants that are fighting a full scale war with the Pakistani army in Bajaur (in the FATA) since August 2008.[7] It is thought that "after Waziristan [that has become the headquarters of the new Taliban movement of Pakistan], Bajaur is perhaps the most significant stronghold of militants from the Taliban and al-Qaeda who have entrenched themselves in the tribal areas".[8] Perhaps the most alarming aspect of this—other than the fact that the militants now seem to be taking the war to the heart of the Pakistani population—is that the militants are better equipped and better coordinated than before. An unnamed Pakistan military official notes that the Pakistani army in Bajaur is not fighting a "ragtag militia" but a most organized force with "mind-boggling" tactics.[9] An even more disturbing fact is brought to light by Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani who speculated that the target of the extremists was not initially the Marriot Hotel but the Pakistani "parliament or the prime minister's residence nearby" and that it was only after failing access to those preferred targets that the easier target of the Marriot Hotel was chosen.[10] This view holds particular credibility given the fact that the "attack came hours after new President Asif Ali Zardari…delivered his first address to parliament [a building] which is just a few hundred meters away", which at the very least is an interesting coincidence and at the very most an intended anti-Pakistani establishment gesture on the part of the extremists.[11]

So what of the violations of Pakistan's sovereignty by American military incursion into the FATA of Pakistan that I argued earlier might likely contribute to a military coup in Pakistan? Pakistan's President Zardari recently asserted that "national sovereignty would get precedence over everything else".[12] This implies that no threats to Pakistani national sovereignty will be tolerated. But while this may seem straight forward to most audiences (both within and without Pakistan), less obvious are the different manifestations of the threats to sovereignty. These different manifestations take the form, I argue, not only of the different understandings of the meaning of 'sovereignty' but also the different elements that can conceivably threaten state sovereignty. In other words, the sovereignty of a state

may be threatened not only by military incursions by another state into the sovereign territory of that state but also by the persistent violence induced by entities from within that state. So, in the case of the national sovereignty of Pakistan, it is not only the recent United States military drones which have been flying into the FATA region of Pakistan without the consent of the Pakistani government and Pakistani Army that are a violation of Pakistani sovereignty, but it is also the Taliban-inspired extremism originating in the FATA region of Pakistan itself that is threatening Pakistan's national sovereignty.

Let us address first the different understandings of the meaning of sovereignty in light of the American extra-legal military incursions into Pakistani territory. Stephen Krasner distinguishes between two kinds of state sovereignty: (1) legal sovereignty and (2) Westphalian sovereignty.[13] The former comprises the granting of legal recognition to any state entity that is assessed by the international community of states (often in the United Nations forum) as both politically and socially feasible to stand and operate as an independent entity.[14] The latter form of sovereignty comprises a rather idealistic notion of the inviolability of absolute independence of any state from any outside incursions in its internal affairs by other states. Krasner argues that in the reality of international affairs, determined as they are by the political likes and dislikes of the powerful states and by the realities of interdependence, it is the notion of legal sovereignty that is propelled by the global hegemons as the 'meaning' of sovereignty, a meaning that can scarcely be violated no matter what intrusive actions powerful states might take against less powerful states in pursuit of their national interests. Such incursions can of course take the form either of coercive military actions (as in the case of the recent American military incursions into the FATA region of Pakistan) or the less physically coercive forms of multinational or unilateral economic sanctions and embargos imposed on a state or, further still, they might take the form of least coercive multinational humanitarian or economic agreements. But whatever form such incursions take, they necessarily violate the notion of Westphalian sovereignty as they force (coercively or less coercively) the state in question to alter its policies hence interfering with its domestic (and foreign) affairs.

Let us now address what I have termed as the different manifestations of the violations of state sovereignty. Even if, as Krasner argues, international realities (in the realpolitik sense) are no longer conducive to the categorical observation of a Westphalian sovereignty, this does not take away from the fact that intrusions into the domestic affairs of a state by other states, particularly when they are in the form of coercive military actions without the consent of the host government, are violations of the state sovereignty of the host government. One manifestation of the violations of sovereignty comes from entities outside the host state in question. And it is thus that such American military actions into the FATA of Pakistan are perceived by both the layperson, the journalists, government and military officials as well as, of course, the extremists in Pakistan. In other words, theoretical and realpolitik debates aside, it is the perceptions on the ground that determines reactions in any state and under any scenario. In the case of Pakistan, as one would expect from being even vaguely familiar with the academic studies of the causes of terrorism, negative perceptions such as the American violation of Pakistani sovereignty are only fueling further the Islamist extremist reaction against both the Americans and also the Pakistani government which, as I noted earlier, has come to be perceived by the Taliban-inspired extremists as at best too weak to contend with the Americans and at worst as the puppets of the American 'War on Terrorism' that is now turning a blind eye to the killings of its own people.

This brings us to the other manifestation of the violations of sovereignty, namely the violation of state sovereignty that comes from threats from within the state entity in question. Terrorism based within the boundaries of a state threatens that state's sovereignty because such acts of violence— particularly as frequently as they have been occurring in Pakistan in the last few years—take away the government's control over its territory. The right of sovereignty is after all the right of controlling the territory within one's state. It is precisely this lack of control that is feared from the perceived 'Talibanization' of Pakistan, a fear that has been on the minds not only of Pakistani journalists and

political columnists for some time now but now also openly on the minds of the Pakistani military establishment as well.

But are the negative perceptions of radical Islamists in Pakistan a reason enough for the Pakistani military to stage a coup and suspend the newly elected democratic government in Pakistan? Clearly not, particularly since such a military action on the part of the Pakistani government might further fuel the anti-Pakistani government stand that the extremists in Pakistan have already embraced. However, when the highly qualified and highly respected Pakistani defense analysts start painting alarming scenarios regarding the larger intention of American military operations in the FATA region of Pakistan then indeed there is cause to consider the possibility of a all out coup d'état in Pakistan and the complete (if temporary) suspension of democratic structures and 'business as usual'. Dr. Shireen Mazari, one of Pakistan's most prominent defense analysts, argued caution against a passive Pakistani acceptance of all and any American actions simply because they are under the guise of the 'war on terrorism' when she noted the following:

The big picture for Pakistan should be more visible now in terms of what the US agenda is for this country…Some of us have been highlighting that agenda for some years [since the post-2001 institution of the American war on terrorism]…and also pointing out how complicity of our leadership was a requirement for that agenda to continue moving ahead. What is that agenda? Clearly, it involves the US creating space within the tribal areas to move in militarily and eventually restructure the whole Muslim nuclear entity of Pakistan.[15]

Leaving aside the credibility of such an assessment, what is important is the implicit (and perhaps not so implicit) accusation Dr. Mazari levies against the Pakistani civilian government itself. This accusation amounts to an assessment of the political incompetence of the Pakistani government in terms of both its inability to secure its borders from outside incursions (namely American military incursions) and also therefore, by extension, its inability to effectively address its growing Islamist extremist opposition at home which, argues Mazari, is only strengthened by the continued American military operations in the FATA and the continued impotency of the Pakistani government against American pressures. Of course, in her condemnation of the Pakistan civilian government she includes a condemnation of the former President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, who came under the 'civilian government' umbrella after he resigned his military post as Army Chief in November 2007.

More critically still, the Pakistani defense analyst's assessments are even more uncomplimentary regarding Pakistan's new President Asif Ali Zardari. Pakistan's defense analyst Mazari condemns President Zardari for making remarks in his interview with the Wall Street Journal during his September 2008 visit to the United States that, in her opinion, not only reflected his intrinsic autocratic nature but also his political and economic greed, a depiction which she argues embarrasses Pakistan as it once again depicts it as having politically inept leadership. Some of the most embarrassing remarks according to Mazari were ones where President Zardari talks of "Pakistan and its institutions as his personal fiefdom" as apparent from remarks such as "my F-16s", "my security personnel" (referring apparently to the Pakistani military) and of course his remark that "he wants the world to 'give me' $100 billion!"[16]

If American military incursions into Pakistan's FATA region continue, and if Pakistan's defense analysts continue to view such incursions as gross violations of Pakistani sovereignty in addition to viewing its current civilian leadership as contributing to this volatile situation and, further still, come to conclude that both the American military incursions as well as the Pakistani government's tacit acceptance of such incursions are only fueling more domestic extremism in Pakistan so that "if the present trends continue we may well eventually confront a civil war across the country" then my assessment of the impending military coup in Pakistan seem suddenly very viable.[17] Theories of civil-military relations point to a direct relationship between the imperative of government coercion for the maintenance of law and order and the likelihood of military coups.[18] So as law and order in

a country deteriorates the military's perception of the necessity of a coup increases. This is not surprising since the military institution of any country is by definition known for its propensity toward coercive and draconian measures which, at a time of violence and instability, appear at once necessary and thus acceptable. Theoretically speaking, the political and social stability of any state may be disrupted due either to a corrupt and inept civilian governance leading subsequently to civilian-military estrangement, a garrison state mentality brought upon either by historically perceived threat of conventional war with neighboring states or the existence of sharp and contentious ethnic divides prone to violent outbursts.[19] In the case of Pakistan, sharp ethnic divides led to the partial fragmentation of the country and the subsequent creation of the new sovereign state of Bangladesh in 1971. But this is not where the story ends. In an article that appeared in Third World Quarterly in 2004 I had argued that in the case of Pakistan it is not only the existence of sharp ethnic (linguistic) divides that most effectively explains the Pakistani military interventions in governance but, even more critically, it is the existence of hate-ridden sectarian divides (Shia-Sunni divides).[20] However, if the violence unleashed by the ethnic and sectarian divides has increased the likelihood of military coups in Pakistan in the past, then the current mushrooming of Jihadi Taliban and Al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism on Pakistani soil will only multiply this effect.

So given the current situation in Pakistan as comprising violations of Pakistani sovereignty both from within (in the form of Islamist extremists in the FATA) and without (in the form of American extralegal military incursions into Pakistan's FATA), a military coup would likely take place, I argue, because of the gravitational force with which Pakistan is being pulled into a garrison state mentality. Add to that an increasing perception on the part of some of the political and military analysts in Pakistan of the political impotence of the new civilian governance in Pakistan and we have the classic formula for a coup d'état. Thus, recent developments in Pakistan only contribute to the efficacy of coercion in governance, a fact that the military may use to legitimize a coup.

If, in light of the above combinations of events, the Pakistani military offers justifications for a coup, these may rest on the following assumptions. First, that the imposition of strict marital law would stifle the ease with which extremists have been operating and moving within Pakistan and thereby give a powerful message to the extremists that the government of Pakistan is not in any mood to play victim. Second, a coup might restore the domestic and international image of the Pakistani military establishment, an image that has been bruised with the tenacity with which terrorism continues in Pakistan and with the unending protracted war that the Pakistani military has been engaged in some of the areas of its FATA and, of course, with the continued unauthorized American military operations in that area. Third, a coup might help restore American confidence that Pakistan is indeed serious about fighting terrorism, a faith that the American administration has made quite obvious is ailing.[21] And if a coup in Pakistan does not halt the unauthorized American military operations within Pakistani territory (given the assumptions that hegemons will pursue their national interests above and beyond any other considerations), it might encourage it to make such operations more implicit, such as with the use of special forces as opposed to the more obvious military instruments. This of course would very well have the added benefit of decreasing the negative perceptions that the radical Islamist groups have regarding the United States and, by extension, reduce its targets within Pakistani cities. The net result of a coup may then be presented as the likelihood of reduction in incidences of terrorism within Pakistan.

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NOTES:

[1] Informal correspondence with Dr. Ayesha Jalal, Mary Richardson Professor of History, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, October 20, 2008.
[2] Anwar Iqbal, "War against terror tops agenda of Bush-Zardari meeting", in Dawn (Karachi, Pakistan) newspaper internet edition (http://DAWN.com), Saturday, September 20, 2008.
[3] Associated Press. "Pakistan Leaders Were to Meet at Hotel, Officials Says", in The Wall Street Journal, Tuesday, September 23, 2008,

A23.

[4] "Tribal elders in Pakistan district assemble 20,000-strong force to fight Taliban militants", Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), special dispatch no. 2058, September 22, 2008. http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP205808

[5] This fact does not negate the recent efforts made by tribal elders of the NWFP to form peace committees against violence and terrorism. See Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) special dispatch no. 2058, September 22, 2008, entitled "Tribal Elders in Pakistani District Assemble 20,000 Strong Force to Fight Talibans".

[6] Syed Irfan Raza, "Waziristan link seen in attack on Marriott: Blast caused by RDX and TNT: Malik", in Dawn newspaper (Karachi, Pakistan), internet edition, Monday, September 22, 2008.

[7] Ismail Khan & Carlotta Gall, "Battle of Bajaur: A Critical Test for Pakistan's Daunted Military", in The New York Times, Tuesday, September 23, 2008, A12.

[8] Ismail Khan & Carlotta Gall, "Battle of Bajaur: A Critical Test for Pakistan's Daunted Military", in The New York Times, Tuesday, September 23, 2008, A12.

[9] Ismail Khan & Carlotta Gall, "Battle of Bajaur: A Critical Test for Pakistan's Daunted Military", in The New York Times, Tuesday, September 23, 2008, A12.

[10] Associated Press, "Pakistan's Leaders Were to Meet at Hotel, Officials Say", The Wall Street Journal, Tuesday, September 23, 2008, A23.

[11] "Suicide attack kills dozens in the heart of Islamabad", in Dawn newspaper (Karachi, Pakistan), internet edition, Sunday, September 21, 2008.

[12] Staff reporter, "Air strikes carried out on flawed intelligence", in Dawn newspaper (Karachi, Pakistan), internet edition, Saturday, September 20, 2008. Emphases have been added here.

[13] See Stephen D. Krasner, Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[14] This means of course that the withholding (by all or some of the members of the international community) of legal recognition for any given state becomes a symbolic gesture akin to a political sanction. The discussion of this matter is however beyond the scope of this article.

[15] Shireen M. Mazari, "Unwilling to shake off America's grip?" in International, The News (Pakistan), Opinion section, Wednesday, October 8, 2008.
http://www.thenews.com.pk/editorial_detail.asp?id=139855

[16] Shireen M. Mazari, "Unwilling to shake off America's grip?" in International, The News (Pakistan), Opinion section, Wednesday, October 8, 2008.
http://www.thenews.com.pk/editorial_detail.asp?id=139855

[17] For Mazari's comments in quotes here, see Shireen M. Mazari, "Unwilling to shake off America's grip?" in International, The News (Pakistan), Opinion section, Wednesday, October 8, 2008.
http://www.thenews.com.pk/editorial_detail.asp?id=139855

[18] Other factors that have been hypothesized as encouraging military coups are (1) the extent of military professionalism, (2) the existence of a garrison state, (3) the expansion of the military's role in the socioeconomic realms of a state, (4) political underdevelopment, (5) corrupt and inept civilian leaderships, (6) economic underdevelopment and (7) the colonial legacy of favoring military-bureaucratic power structures that have increased the propensity of praetorianism in post-colonial eras. For a detailed analysis of these theories see Coercion and Governance: The declining political role of the military in Asia, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Sanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[19] Given the scope of this article I have excluded other variables of military coups, such as structural legacies of colonial rule and a lack of military professionalism (which in traditional wisdom of the studies of this phenomenon is understood as the tendency or tradition of the military to intervene in political matters of the state that are usually largely beyond the constitutional jurisdiction of military institutions in most states, including Pakistan). For a excellent survey of these factors in the context of Asian states see Muthiah Alagappa, "Investigating and Explaining Change: An analytical framework", in Coercion and Governance: The declining political role of the military in Asia, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Sanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[20] I shall not here elaborate in detail the nature of both the ethnic or sectarian divides nor the dynamic of civil military relations that I have argued have encouraged praetorianism in Pakistan since the details of this argument have already been published in my article entitled "Ethnic and sectarian violence and the propensity toward praetorianism in Pakistan", Third World Quarterly, vol. 24, no. 3, 2003, pp. 463-477.

[21] Anwar Iqbal, "US leaders urge Pakistan to intensify war on terror" in Dawn newspaper (Karachi, Pakistan), internet edition, Monday, September 22, 2008. See also Ismail Khan & Carlotta Gall, "Battle of Bajaur: A Critical Test for Pakistan's Daunted Military", in The New York Times, Tuesday, September 23, 2008, A12.

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