

# **HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? TERRORISM AND THE NEW WAR**

EDITED BY

**JAMES F. HOGGE, JR., AND GIDEON ROSE**  
EDITOR AND MANAGING EDITOR OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



PUBLICAFFAIRS  
NEW YORK

That being said, the Saudis do have some soul-searching to do, even if it cannot be imposed on them from outside. Official Wahhabism may not encourage antistate violence, but it is a particularly severe and intolerant interpretation of Islam. It encourages the view that even fellow Muslims who do not meet its strict standards should not be considered members of the community. This viewpoint is dangerously divisive. The Saudi elites should consider just what role such a severe doctrine and the vast religious infrastructure they have built around it played in bin Laden's rise. If some fine-tuning of doctrine would reduce the risk of extremist violence, they should have the courage to consider it before it's too late.

## COMMANDEERING THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE

### BIN LADEN'S BELATED CONCERN

■  
SAMUEL R. BERGER AND MONA SUTPHEN

A French newspaper recently described President George W. Bush as "responsible" for the September 11 assault on the United States because he had turned his back on negotiations in the Middle East. One does not need to browse widely through the Middle Eastern press, or indeed read the comments of many of the region's leaders, to hear the argument that, in some fashion, the attacks on America were the cruel but somehow inevitable consequence of Muslim rage over unfulfilled Palestinian aspirations, U.S. support for Israel, and the failure of the peace process.

To truly understand the brutal attacks on the United States and the motivation of the attackers, however, it is important to unravel the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other sources of anti-American sentiment in the region from the strategic objectives of Osama bin Laden and his operatives—and to distinguish sharply between the purpose he seeks to achieve and the grievances he seeks to exploit.

With theological roots in a rigid strain of Wahhabism, bred by a growing antipathy against the elite regimes that rule the states of the Arab world, and hardened by anti-imperialist fervor during the ten-year battle to repel the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, bin Laden's *jihad* took shape with the deployment of troops to the Arabian Peninsula by the United States and its allies during the Persian Gulf War. "Occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places" is at the core of bin Laden's indictment against us. His virulent screeds have defined his purpose: imposition of his radical, fundamentalist vision in a Muslim domain stretching from Central Asia through the Persian Gulf and beyond, starting with the expulsion of the United States from the region.

Along the way, ideology crossed over into fanaticism—"the violent transformation of an irretrievably sinful and unjust world," in the words of Harvard University professor Michael Ignatieff. If Saddam Hussein is a traditional pursuer of hegemony, seeking to assert his personal control over the region, bin Laden is an ideological one, seeking a radical Islamic revolution. In many ways, bin Laden's ultimate "twin towers" are Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and the United States is as much his instrument as his object, as he seeks not only to harm our country grievously but also to provoke Washington into the kind of polarizing response that wraps us around the necks of those governments, pulls them down, and replaces them with revolutionary regimes.

So at the outset, one must separate bin Laden's agenda from the distinct but relevant identification of the sources of sympathy for him and resentment in the Arab and Muslim worlds. Indeed, until it served his larger purposes after the September 11 attacks, bin Laden had been no champion of the Palestinian cause, although conflict in the Middle East has allowed him to more easily coalesce a wide range of terrorist groups under the Al Qaeda umbrella. Nor is bin Laden's cause social equity; he is not some distorted reflection of the "anti-globalization" movement, although despair, inequity, and corruption provide him camouflage. If any evidence of this is needed, five million starving Afghans are poignant testimony to his passion for social justice.

Unquestionably, the cycle of violence in the Middle East over the past year, which from the Arab perspective is driven by Israel's occupation and its American-supplied power (without regard to Palestinian provocations), has provided resonance for bin Laden in the region. Moreover, America is a magnet for a range of frustrations—some derived from our power and some from our policies. But it is important to lay flatly to rest the notion that September 11 somehow is payback for American support of Israel or for the failure of American Middle East policy. The United States must make this point forcefully, even as it recognizes that the long-term strategy for destroying bin Laden and Al Qaeda requires the extremists be marginalized rather than glorified. To do so will, in part, involve defusing the Middle East con-

flict, providing security for Israel and dignity for the Palestinians. This goal is not likely to be achieved without active U.S. engagement.

Success in the peace process would not deflect bin Laden any more than the failure of the negotiations at Camp David in the summer of 2000 would have contributed to the September 11 terrorist attacks. Bin Laden's first efforts to target the United States—attacking U.S. troops in Yemen and Somalia in 1992 and 1993—came with the birth of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in Oslo. His brutal assault on the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998 came well before the start of the *intifada* that has so rolled the waters in the region. Planning for the latest attacks appears to have been well under way by the time of Camp David and continued simultaneously with the quieter negotiations in the months that followed.

These plans were laid at a time when the outlines of a peace agreement could be seen that involved the return of at least 95 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians, with further offsets from Israeli land; a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem; some form of divided sovereignty on the Temple Mount; and the opportunity for a decent life for Palestinian refugees, if not the right of return to Israel that they desired. Ultimately, there was no agreement, but these contours, advanced by the United States after eight years of intense effort, hardly reflect a lack of American sympathy to Palestinian aspirations. None of that was relevant to bin Laden's equation.

Indeed, a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is inimical to bin Laden's interests and objectives. In many respects, the situation there is the last remaining unresolved question as to whether a state system within the Arab world will prevail or whether bin Laden's vision of a theocratic Islamist empire will gain ground. A Palestinian state, co-existing alongside Israel, would be a serious blow to bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Not only would it stabilize and solidify the Arab state system, it would demonstrate acceptance of pluralism in the region—a concept antithetical to bin Laden's interpretation of Islam.

Nor is it true that the failure of the Camp David negotiations

created the *intifada* that has so changed the landscape of the region. If anything, the peace process in the Middle East was undercut because it went too slowly, not too fast. The promise of Oslo and the Interim Agreement of 1993 was the expectation that five years of self-rule and confidence-building would lay the groundwork for tackling the hard issue of a final peace. As that timeline slipped—a victim of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, the terrorism of Hamas, a falling rather than rising standard of living for the Palestinian people, a loss of confidence among Israelis and Palestinians alike, a Palestinian Authority that did not prepare its people for peace or inspire the world with trust, and three years of Binjamin Netanyahu's government in Israel, which turned its back to the peace process—trust and momentum eroded. Frustration on both sides mounted.

Not long after Rabin's funeral, as the process slowed and hope on both sides became harder to sustain, President Bill Clinton reflected one evening that "Rabin's assassin knew exactly what he was doing." President Clinton called the sides to Camp David in the summer of 2000 because he and his advisers foresaw exactly what could happen if the opportunity for a breakthrough for peace was not seized. Indeed, violence already had broken out during the "days of rage" earlier in May. The future without peace was painfully clear: a deadly cycle of violence that would threaten Israel's future, devastate the Palestinian people, and radicalize the region in a way that now provides ideological sanctuary for bin Laden, just as the mountains of Afghanistan provide him physical sanctuary.

America's long-term strategy against terrorism must incorporate several elements if it is to marginalize the extremists in the Muslim world. First, we must dismantle and destroy the terror groups arrayed against us, and their support systems, using every tool at our disposal, including military force. In so doing, we must use that force in a way that isolates the extremists without isolating us. We must be unrelenting in our pursuit of an enemy that thinks it can outlast us; our staying power is as important as our firepower. And our actions must be justifiable to the world as destroying those who attack us and those who support them—

not less and not more. To sustain what will necessarily be a long-term effort, we must preserve international support, assistance, and stability, particularly among Afghanistan's neighbors. Our use of force must be strategic, intelligence-driven, and targeted, avoiding civilian casualties as much as possible. The terrible images of planes shattering buildings and lives on September 11 must remain etched in the world's consciousness. They should not be replaced with images that only confuse the distinction between perpetrator and victim.

Second, we must bring more of our diplomatic, political, intellectual, and economic energy to the Islamic world, with more knowledge and broader vision. This requires sustained, informed, and high-level engagement. We must lift the veil of ignorance that separates us from the diverse one-fourth of the world that is Muslim. Our own society provides an important resource: nearly ten million Muslim Americans, including millions of Arab Americans, can be a bridge, not a target.

Third, we must actively seek to reverse the spiral of violence in the Middle East by creating a political process that at least can offer breathing space for the Palestinians and the Israelis. Without such actions on our part, the conflict will continue to be a cauldron of bitterness that will drive the center of gravity in the region in a radical direction. We should be intransigent about terror in the region, but not intransigent in exploring ways to end the violence.

The challenge for both Israel and the Palestinians is to confront terrorism under the current circumstances. For Yasir Arafat, this means he cannot continue to use Hamas and Islamic Jihad to fight his political struggle, because doing so destroys his own moral and political credibility and that of the Palestinian Authority. For Israel, it means there are risks to categorically equating Arafat with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, because doing so legitimizes the very fundamentalists that must be marginalized in order to achieve peace.

The essential political dimension of the struggle against Al Qaeda and the extremists will not succeed over the long term if the leaders of the Arab world do not come to grips with their

own weaknesses and vulnerabilities. For the most part, they have deferred the hard decisions on modernization and openness by deflecting popular disaffection in their own countries toward the United States and toward Israel. To survive, leaders in the region must create and present to their peoples a viable alternative to radicalism and repression: modern Islamic states that respect individual rights, fight corruption, and prove that modernization and Islam are not incompatible. Pluralism and development in the region are the enemies of extremism, not Islam.

With all of this, some level of anti-Americanism will persist. Our power, wealth, and culture make us an inevitable target for resentment, both related and unrelated to our policies. Our histories and circumstances are very different. But so long as the United States brings firmness, wisdom, and a broader vision to its efforts, it is not inevitable that our futures must diverge.

## STRANGLING THE HYDRA TARGETING AL QAEDA'S FINANCES

■  
WILLIAM F. WECHSLER

Days after the devastating attack on the United States, the president addressed Americans still reeling from the violence. Speaking from the White House, he assured his fellow citizens that the U.S. response would not be limited to military retaliation or a law-enforcement investigation: Washington would also target the financial network that facilitated and supported the operations of Osama bin Laden's henchmen and terrorism more generally. "I have just signed an executive order directing the Treasury to block all financial transactions between the bin Laden terrorist group and American persons and companies," the president said. "It puts the financial world on notice: if you do business with terrorists, if you support or sponsor them, you will not do business with the United States of America."

Actually, it was two presidents who said that. The first half of the quote came from Bill Clinton and was uttered on August 22, 1998, shortly after the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The second half was said by George W. Bush on September 24, 2001, following the strikes on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Two presidents, two terrorist attacks, two executive orders, two calls to target Al Qaeda's global financial network. And yet Al Qaeda still has all the money it needs to carry out its operations.

In the aftermath of both attacks, many in Congress and the news media argued that Washington could easily cripple the terrorists by shutting down Al Qaeda's financial network. That the United States had not already done so, they claimed, was evidence of official nonchalance, capitulation to the desires of the domestic