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ARTICLE

Leaderless Resistance: The New Face of Terrorism

GEORGE MICHAEL

Over the past several years, the face of terrorism has undergone substantial change. Although the US government is understandably concerned about well-established and enduring terrorist organizations, there is a noticeable trend indicating the increasing prevalence of so-called lone wolf attacks by individuals and small cells with little or no connections to larger groups. Since 9/11, authorities have broken up several small Islamists cell that plotted terrorist attacks. In recent years, several lone-wolf incidents have gained headlines. For instance, in April 2009, Richard A. Poplawski, a young man who expressed racist views on extremist websites, open fired on police in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania killing three officers.[1] Just a few weeks after that incident, an anti-abortion activist, Scott Roeder, murdered a physician who performed late-term abortions.[2] In June, a lone gunman, a little-known, but long-standing right-wing extremist, James von Brunn, opened fire at the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC killing one guard.[3] Then in November, Major Nidal Malik Hasan, a Muslim-American psychiatrist in the US Army, went on a shooting rampage at Fort Hood, Texas which killed 12 and left 31 wounded.[4]

More incidents followed in 2010. On 18 February, a 53-year-old software engineer and tax protestor, Joseph Stack, slammed his private plane into a building in Austin, Texas that contained offices of the Inland Revenue Service, which triggered a massive fireball that set the edifice aflame.[5] And on 1 May, Faisal Shahzad, a US citizen who was born in Pakistan, attempted to detonate three bombs in a sports utility vehicle that was parked in the heart of Times Square in New York

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City.[6] Although he reportedly made contact with the Pakistani Taliban during a trip to Pakistan in 2008, after his arrest Shahzad insisted that he had acted entirely alone while in the United States.

In the summer of 2009, federal authorities announced an effort to detect lone attackers who might be contemplating politically-charged assaults. Dubbed the 'Lone Wolf Initiative', it began shortly after the inauguration of President Barack Obama in part because of the rising level of hate speech and increasing gun sales.[7] In fact, as early as 1998, the FBI publicly announced that small fringe groups could be planning attacks on their own initiative as the case of Eric Robert Rudolph illustrated. The young man supposedly drifted in and out of white supremacist groups before embarking on his one-man campaign of violence, which included bombing abortion clinics, a gay bar, and the Centennial Park at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta.[8] After 9/11, the FBI feared that certain events, such as the war in Iraq, and increasing tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, could become potential catalysts for future attacks.[9] This was tragically illustrated in February 2002, when a seemingly normal 15-year-old Florida youth deliberately slammed a single engine plane into a Florida office building.[10]

Despite these episodes of sporadic violence, some observers dismiss the notion of "leaderless resistance" as primarily a nuisance in that it poses no substantial or existential threat to the nation and could thus be more aptly consigned to the field of abnormal psychology. To be sure, several of the perpetrators mentioned above had histories of mental illness and it is difficult to tell with certainty if ideology was determinative in their decisions to carry out their attacks. In that vein, the case of Luke Helder comes to mind. In May 2002, the 21-year-old college student planted 24 pipe bombs in mailboxes, six of which exploded. Scattered over several states — Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, Colorado, and Texas — Helder explained that the geographic placement of the bombs was intended to make a 'smiley face' pattern on the map. No one was killed, but four letter carriers and two residents were injured.[11]

Others, however, believe that the leaderless resistance trend should be taken seriously, if for no other reason than the disruption lone wolves can inflict, as demonstrated by the Beltway snipers in the fall of 2002. As a result of their violent escapades, John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo were charged with, or suspected, in 21 shootings in Alabama, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Washington, and Virginia. All totaled, they were believed to have killed ten persons and wounded three others in the Washington DC metro area alone. Although their campaign does not appear to be ideologically-driven, it could never-

theless serve as a model for an individual or group with a political agenda.[12]

In the current climate of fear in America, leaderless resistance has the potential to be seriously disruptive to the normal functioning of daily life. In that regard, jihadists operating in the United States would not have to resort to more "spectaculars" in the style of 9/11 to be effective, rather any kind of seemingly random assassinations and bombings could be psychologically devastating to the American public.[13] Furthermore, the most notorious lone wolves in the United States – Timothy McVeigh, Ted Kaczynski, and Bruce Ivins (the alleged anthrax terrorist) – wreaked havoc cheaply.[14] Inasmuch as lone wolves operate alone, they are presumably more difficult to monitor because they lack ties to organizations that could already be under surveillance. As the case of the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, demonstrated, a highly-intelligent and motivated terrorist working alone can carry on a campaign of violence over the course of many years.

Increasingly, individuals and small groups are responsible for some of the most lethal acts of terrorism. To be sure, well-established organizations, such as Hizballah, Hamas, the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), the Tamil Tigers, and Al-Qaeda, continue to mount operations; however, individuals and much smaller cells, sometimes inspired by the ideologies that inform the more established groups, are able to autonomously mount operations without central direction. In the contemporary world, the likelihood of major armed conflicts between nations has diminished. Moreover, with the collapse of the Soviet Communism, the world has entered a 'unipolar' era in which one sole superpower predominates. Sometimes referred to as the 'new world order', this development has drastically changed the security environment within which terrorists operate. In many parts of the world, the setting is not conducive to large, clandestine groups insofar as many foreign governments are coordinating their counterterrorism efforts with the US government, as they seek to dismantle terrorist organizations and deny them funding and resources. This trend accelerated after 9/11. Moreover, new surveillance technology has enabled governments to better monitor dissident groups and potential terrorists. As a consequence, larger groups cannot operate as effectively as they had in the past in that they are more vulnerable to infiltration and disruption.

On the other hand, the emergence of new technology also has the potential to serve as a force multiplier for terrorists. For example, the Internet allows like-minded activists to operate on their own

initiative without the direction of a formal organization –hence, the emergence of leaderless resistance as a new operational strategy and the miniaturization of terrorist and insurgent movements around the world today. These developments mark a major departure from previous paradigms of warfare and insurgency.

In essence, 'leaderless resistance' is a kind of lone wolf operation in which an individual, or a very small cohesive group, engages in terrorism independent of any official movement, leader or network of support.[15] In order to be effective as a strategic approach, leaderless resistance assumes that multiple individuals and groups hold a common ideology and are willing to act on shared views in a violent or confrontational manner.

As John Robb presaged in his book *Brave New War: The Next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization*, the rise of small-scale, 'do-it-yourself' terrorism could become more worrisome than the centrally planned attacks about which the US seemed most concerned.[16] In fact, the US Department of State observed a trend whereby more dispersed, localized, and smaller-scale groups are increasingly active in terrorism, often with great lethal effect.[17] The prospect of leaderless resistance is worrisome for authorities insofar as all that connects the various individuals and cells is a common ideology thus making them more difficult to detect and deter. In his book *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution*, Howard Rheingold explained how ordinary people could harness new technologies to attain political and social goals. For example, in 2001, 'smart mobs' in Manila overthrew President Joseph Ejercito Estrada in organized demonstrations coordinated by forwarding text messages via cell phones. Similarly, anti-globalization activists used mobile phones, websites, laptops, and hand-held computers as part of their swarming tactics that halted the meeting of the World Trade Organization in November 1999.[18]

This essay reviews four case studies to illustrate how the concept of leaderless resistance has been developed and implemented by radical dissident movements, including the extreme right, the anti-globalization movement, eco- and animal rights terrorists, and the global Islamic resistance movement. The popularity of the leaderless resistance among such a disparate array of extremists and dissidents suggest that the concept is increasingly popular and viable as a tactical approach.

The American Extreme Right

Actually, the American extreme right has done the most theorizing on the concept of leaderless resistance. At the present time, the extreme

right is a relatively small and marginalized movement that does not enjoy broad based support from the public. Moreover, most in the movement realize that the forces arrayed against them –the government and well-financed monitoring organizations (e.g., the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center) –are collectively vastly more powerful than they are. Consequently, there has always been a conservative majority in the movement that believed that it would be foolhardy to prematurely engage in revolutionary violence. Such an approach would almost certainly lead to organizational suicide. Thus, the more conservative elements advocated a strategy that would concentrate on utilizing propaganda to build a revolutionary majority, which came to be known as the theory of mass action.[19]

A leading proponent of mass action approach was George Lincoln Rockwell, the founder of the American Nazi Party that was most active in the decade of the 1960s. Rockwell believed that events and trends, such as racial integration, school busing, the Vietnam War, race riots, and rising crime, would engender urban mayhem and thus create favorable conditions for his party. Extrapolating the trends, he predicted that a full-blown race war would commence by the end of the 1960s.[20] In light of his projected crisis atmosphere, he entertained the idea that his party could actually win national power by 1972, but in 1967, he fell to an assassin's bullet, and with his departure, some elements of the extreme right became disillusioned with the conservative approach.[21]

Foremost among them was Joseph Tomassi, a member of Rockwell's successor organization who eventually departed and founded the National Socialist Liberation Front (NSLF), a neo-Nazi organization that patterned itself on the left-wing models of the Weatherman and the Symbionese Liberation Army. Correctly, he saw that in the early 1970s, the idea of creating a Nazi-style party that would win the support of a majority of the population was futile. Nevertheless, he believed that it was still possible to strike blows against 'the system' provided that revolutionaries were prepared to act resolutely and alone. Whereas the state demonstrated over and over again that it could infiltrate and effectively neutralize any dissident organization, it had yet to develop the capability of thwarting the actions of individuals or small groups acting alone. However, the NSLF campaign was reckless and its revolutionary arm was quickly crushed, and like Rockwell, Tomassi was killed by a disgruntled member. Although the organization never succeeded in striking a serious blow against 'the system', according to one observer its 'contribution to the leaderless resistance concept [was] incalcula-

ble'.[22] Still, the approach had still not been given a name and the idea would languish until the early 1990s.

The leaderless resistance concept really crystallized and gained currency as a result of the October 1992 meeting in Estes Park, Colorado convoked by a Christian Identity minister, Pastor Pete Peters. This event provided a forum for the articulation of a new leaderless resistance approach. Whereas prior to the meeting the concept was only vaguely recognized by some, it was now given a name and disseminated to a much larger audience. This event, more than any other, popularized the notion in the extreme right subculture.[23] At that event, Louis Beam, a longstanding activist, released the seminal essay 'Leaderless Resistance' in which he argued that the traditional hierarchical organizational structure was untenable under current conditions.

A firebrand orator, Beam was previously a leader of a Klan organization and at one time served as the Aryan Nations' 'ambassador at large'. In the Vietnam War, he served as helicopter door-gunner and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. In 1988, he was one of the defendants at the Fort Smith Sedition Trial at which a who's who of some of the most radical elements of the extreme right were accused of plotting to overthrow the government. All defendants, however, were acquitted.[24] Pastor Peters included Beam's essay on leaderless resistance in a published report on the meeting.[25] In his essay, Beam identified the late Colonel Ulius Louis Amoss as his source of inspiration for his theory. A former operative of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), Amoss had written about mounting resistance in the event that the United States was taken over by Communists during the Cold War. According to Beam, an organized approach was untenable under current conditions insofar as the government was too powerful and would not allow the existence of any potentially serious oppositional organizations. The leaderless resistance model proffered by Beam rejected the pyramid structure in which the leadership is located at the top and the mass of followers at the bottom. He reasoned that in a technologically advanced society, such as contemporary America, the government, through means such as electronic surveillance, could without much difficulty, penetrate the structure and reveal its chain of command. From there, the organization could be effectively neutralized from within by infiltrators and agents provocateurs.

Beam considered the Communist cell system, but determined that it was inappropriate for the contemporary American extreme right because the movement could not presently avail itself of the resources that the Communist cells had, namely, central direction, outside support, and adequate funding. As a strategic alternative, Beam invoked the 'phantom

cell' model of organization as described by Colonel Amoss. This approach drew upon the 'Sons of Liberty', or the 'Committees of Correspondence'—the Revolutionary War patriots who resisted British colonial rule –as a strategic basis of resistance for the contemporary extreme right. According to Beam's historical interpretation of this movement, it operated in small cells independently of the others with no central command or direction. Applying this model, Beam argued that it became the responsibility of the individual to acquire the necessary skills and information to carry out what needed to be done. Members take action when and where they see fit. Organs of information, such as newspapers, leaflets, and now the Internet, enable each person to keep informed of events. Beam conceded that leaderless resistance was a 'child of necessity', but argued that all other alternatives were either unworkable or impractical. Furthermore, he pointed out that this approach presented an intelligence nightmare for authorities insofar as it is much more difficult to infiltrate 'a thousand different small phantom cells opposing them.'[26] The essay was disseminated through computer networks of which Beam was a pioneer in exploiting during the 1980s.[27] Beam's revolutionary approach quickly caught on and ushered in a period of theorizing and debate on the topics of resistance and terrorism within the extreme right. Moreover, the government and monitoring groups were quick to take notice and saw this as evidence of the development of a loose, but widespread, extreme right terrorist network.[28]

Richard Kelly Hoskins, a Christian Identity minister from Lynchburg, Virginia, also popularized the leaderless resistance approach in his 1990 book, *Vigilantes of Christendom*, in which he offered his bizarre interpretation of historical events. According to Hoskins, throughout history, righteous 'Phineas Priests' fulfilled a sacred role by assassinating those who have transgressed God's law.[29] Not long after the first publication of the book, several right-wing terrorists identifying themselves as Phineas Priests engaged in criminal acts, including robbery and terrorism; however, the name appears to denote more of a 'state of the mind' fellowship than a formal organization.[30]

The late Dr William L. Pierce of the National Alliance contributed to the popularity of leaderless resistance with the publication of a novel titled *Hunter*, which is in some ways the sequel to *The Turner Diaries* –a fictional story of an apocalyptic race war that convulses America —— which is believed to have inspired several episodes of right-wing violence including the campaigns of the Order and the Aryan Republican Army, the Oklahoma City bombing, and the London bombing spree of

David Copeland.[31] *Hunter* tells the story of a lone wolf assassin, Oscar Yeager, who initially murders interracial couples. By doing so, he believed that the symbolic effect might encourage others to replicate his acts. As the story goes on, Yeager's worldview develops along the way, as he begins as merely a racist and later becomes a full-blown anti-Semite. Under the direction of a rogue FBI agent, Yeager wages a one-man terror campaign against politicians and politically liberal activists, among others.[32]

Since the early 1980s, the American extreme right has evolved from a movement characterized by ultra patriotism, to one increasingly oriented to a revolutionary outlook. This can be explained in large part to the fact that various social trends over the past several decades have significantly changed the texture of the United States. For those in the extreme right, America is not the same country they once knew. What is more, many in the movement consider the 'damage' done too great to be repaired by conventional methods. Only radical solutions, it seems, can save the nation and race. From their perspective, this increasingly desperate predicament demands that the old order be torn asunder and a new order be built upon the ruins. Out of this destruction it is believed that the remnants of Western civilization will create a new golden age characterized by creativity and racial solidarity.[33] However, in order to arrive at this much-heralded new era, some trigger event or catalyst is necessary to usher in a revolutionary epoch, which would include great tribulation and sacrifice. On that note, the presidential candidacy of Barack Obama seemed to alarm some segments of the white nationalist movement. In October 2008, two young men, Daniel Cowart of Bells, Tennessee, and Paul Schlesselman of West Helena, Arkansas, were arrested for an alleged plot to rob a gun store, target students at a largely black high school, and then attempt to assassinate Obama.[34]

Despite the popularity of leaderless resistance in the extreme right subculture, the movement has failed to implement an effective strategy. The principal weakness of the American extreme right has been its lack of ideological coherence and its failure to develop a platform that would appeal to a sizable portion of the public. This has inhibited the movement from developing a sense of unity that would allow it to mobilize effectively and on a broad scale. By contrast, as a political activist in the 1920s and earlier 1930s, Adolf Hitler demanded that the various German nationalist parties merge with his NSDAP and adopt its platform. As Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, only with the power of a singular ideology could the political right prevail over its Marxist opponents. Similarly, the Communist movement of the early twentieth century, despite its various

factions, developed an ideology around which activists could organize and seek political power. More recently, Osama bin Laden's vision of Islamism attracted radical Muslims around the world, despite the fact that his formal organization has been severely damaged by military action from the United States and its allies. In contradistinction, the American extreme right's lack of ideological coherence has undercut any unified sense of mission among its followers and thus makes an implementation of the leaderless resistance approach less feasible. Scattered elements of the left-wing oriented anti-globalization movement have taken up the leaderless resistance theme as well.

The Anti-Globalization Movement

Back in 1999, two researchers at the RAND Corporation, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, first predicted that the old hierarchical, organizational structures of terrorist groups were giving way to a flatter, or horizontal organizations that would be more networked-based. As they presaged, new information technology enabled the development of these networked-style insurgencies to take hold. This allowed for 'swarming'– a new operational innovation whereby dispersed nodes of a network of forces converge on a target from multiple directions to accomplish a task. The overall aim is for members of a terrorist network to converge rapidly on a target and disperse immediately until it is time again to recombine for a new pulse.[35] They identified swarming as a form of Netwar, which they define as 'an emerging mode of conflict (and crime) at societal levels, short of traditional military warfare, in which the protagonists use network forms of organization and related doctrines, strategies, and technologies attuned to the information age'.[36] What distinguishes netwar from previous forms of conflict is the networked organizational basis of the practitioners. Many of the groups are leaderless, yet their members are able to combine in swarming attacks.[37] The emergence of so-called amateur terrorism is related to the spread of information technologies that allow dispersed groups and individuals the ability to conspire and coordinate attacks across considerable distances.[38] For instance, the Zapatista movement in Mexico has employed a form of netwar. Reaching out to a range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it has impelled the Mexican government to call a halt to military operations on several occasions.[39] Swarming is most effective when it is designed around the deployment of small, dispersed, and networked maneuverable units.[40]

The Internet facilitates swarming in several ways. For example, in the fall of 1999, diverse elements of the anti-globalization movement converged in Seattle to disrupt an important meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Through the Internet, various groups and activists were able to coordinate their efforts and swarm, or come together. Much of the cohesion of the activists stemmed from improvised communications, including cell phones, radios, police scanners, and portable computers. Employing these media, they were able to link into continuously updated web pages and other new sources which gave reports from the street.[41] As Paul de Armond observed, the WTO protests succeeded because of a combination of strategic surprise and tactical openness. The 'Battle of Seattle' was fought not only in the streets, but also in the infosphere.[42]

During the melee, a loose coalition –the 'Black Bloc'–composed of anarchists, legitimate demonstrators, and opportunistic criminals were able to come together for short-term activism.[43] The police were not prepared for this type of postmodern networked conflict.[44] The main organizer of street activity was planned by the Direct Action Network (DAN) whose members provided a nucleus of blockades around which crowd actions were directed.[45] Another major actor was organized labor, mainly the AFL-CIO, a hierarchical instruction that emphasizes a top-down leadership structure. Although their main body had no interest in joining with DAN, after a few days of protests, there was a spillover from the union's crowds into DAN's street action. Whereas the AFL-CIO planned on holding a march in downtown Seattle to bring attention to their labor concerns, DAN and other like-minded activists sought to shut down the WTO meeting by enclosing the conference site.[46]

As the protests in Seattle demonstrated, the anti-globalization movement has adopted new swarming tactics and has formulated its own version of leaderless resistance. The leading proponents, the Italian Marxist Antonio Negri and Duke University Professor Michael Hardt, theorize that Autonomist Marxism can serve as a model for overthrowing the global capitalist system.[47] Rather than the masses of workers acting in unison in revolt as Lenin and Mao prophesized, Negri and Hardt argue that a patchwork of autonomous 'multitudes' can effectively oppose the current capitalist version of globalization and replace it with an alternative globalization based on socialism.[48] Thus a variegated collection of protest groups –anarchists, environmentalists, and working-class laborers –can organize against a common foe. Although they may lack a single leader, an organizational hierarchy, and a common ideology, they are nonetheless held

together by a shared opposition to the current process of globalization as evidenced by the protests that paralyzed Seattle in 1999.[49]

Despite a myriad of differences, Negri and Hardt maintain that the multitude can find commonality and work together to attain democracy and create an alternative globalization. Whereas previous revolutionary movements were led by vanguard parties with centralized leadership, they argue that a new networked 'movement of movements' can successfully effect change. They cite the 1999 protests of the WTO as the embryonic display of this model. A variety of movements, groups, and activists came together to oppose the 'neoliberal' orientation of the global economic order sometimes referred to as the 'Washington Consensus'.[50] Anti-globalization activists created their own 'Independent Media Centers' in those cities where the major protests occurred.[51] By exploiting new forms of communication, such an Indymedia, activists can break the information monopoly of the corporate media and become actively involved in the production of information.[52] Increasingly, dissident and terrorist groups are taking advantage of the so-called new media. In recent months, other left-wing movements, including the numerous 'occupy' protests and the Anonymous 'hacktivist' group, have implemented a leaderless strategy. The radical environmentalist and animal liberation movements have also proven adept at using the leaderless method.

Eco-extremism and the Radical Animal Liberation Movement

For over two decades, elements of the radical ecology and animal liberation movements have demonstrated adeptness in implementing leaderless resistance. Although the environmentalist movement has a long pedigree, criminality and violence stemming from the movement did not really emerge in force until the last decades of the twentieth century. A leading figure in the radicalization of the movement was Edward Abbey, who began sawing down billboards in New Mexico in 1958. Other groups would follows suit in the early 1970s with similar operations. For example, a Tucson-based group called the 'Eco-Raiders' cut down billboards, destroyed newly constructed houses, pulled up survey stakes, and dumped thousands of cans and bottles on the doorstep of the Kalil Bottling Company. The authorities apprehended five college students believed to have been responsible for the Eco-Raiders' campaign of vandalism. Their exploits became the model for a gang of activists as depicted in the influential book, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, which proffered a call to militant action.[53]

The tale involves four main characters who band together to mount a campaign against industrial firms and developers in the American southwest. After bewailing the degradation of the environment, they decide to take direct action in a campaign of sabotage against the culprits. Eschewing violence, they target exclusively machinery, bridges, tractors, bulldozers, billboards, power stations, and railroad cars.[54] The novel is believed to have inspired some environmentalists to seek a more radical vehicle for their activism, which culminated in the creation of Earth First! in 1980 (which, incidentally, Abbey never joined, yet he associated with its members and occasionally wrote for its organ).[55] According to several existing versions, in 1980, while on a week-long hiking and camping trip in Mexico's Pinacate Desert, five environmental activists –David Foreman, Ron Kezar, Bart Koehler, Michael Roselle, and Howie Wolke –discussed ways to further the goals of their movement.[56] Out of this meeting, Earth First! was formed.

Disagreements over tactics, however, created a breach that developed in the ranks of Earth First!, which nevertheless, experienced continued growth throughout the decade peaking at about 10,000 adherents by the late 1980s. An influx of activists from the West Coast brought with them an affinity for a variety of social justice issues of which environmental concerns was just one part. They tended to favor civil disobedience tactics over monkey-wrenching. This approach alienated some of the more 'biocentric' activists in the movement contributing to Foreman's decision to leave the group in 1990 after he complained that leftists, who favored humanism over biocentrism, had infiltrated the movement.[57] As underground activists became marginalized and isolated from other members of their movement, a process of progressive radicalization occurred, which produced more violent activists, including lone wolves, bent on carrying out terrorism.[58] Over the years, the movement would become more prone to vandalism leading to the creation of even more radical spinoff organizations.

Founded in Brighton, England in 1992, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) was formed after Earth First! activists decided to distance themselves from illegal activities.[59] Their slogan –'the burning rage of a dying planet'–is suggestive of their more radical bent. The spinoff organization has been responsible for well over $100 million in property damages since 1997. Not long thereafter, the idea of decoupling the above ground segment of the movement from illegal activities took hold in America. Essentially a leaderless movement, ELF has no official membership, leadership, or central organization. Rather, ELF activists and cells act autonomously and remain anonymous to the public, thus maxi-

mizing their fluidity of movement.[60] Rather than a formal membership, ELF produces guidelines that exhort activists to cause economic damage to firms that despoil the environment; educate the public on the harm being done to the environment; and take all necessary precautions to avoid harming life. Essentially a state of mind organization, anyone who follows these guidelines is considered a member of ELF. An element of anarchism informs ELF's ideology, as members see the destruction of the global capitalist economy as a prerequisite to saving life on earth.[61]

The first recognized ELF actions in America occurred in 1996, when operatives struck McDonald's restaurants, gluing their locks and spray painting the buildings with slogans. In 1997, ELF first claimed responsibility for an attack in the United States, when operatives burned down a Bureau of Land Management horse corral in Oregon.[62] A year later, ELF made headlines when it claimed responsibility for arson at a ski resort in Vail, Colorado, which caused $12 million in damage. The most destructive incident, however, occurred on 1 August 2003, when arsonists set fire to a housing complex under construction and destroyed a 100-foot crane in San Diego, California, causing losses estimated at $50 million.[63] Although acts of eco-terrorism have not been lethal, they have been quite numerous and costly. According to the FBI's head of domestic terrorism, ELF alone was linked to 600 criminal acts committed between 1996 and 2002 totaling $43 million in damage.[64] Collectively in America, the radical environmental movement committed hundreds of arsons and acts of vandalism, causing more than $100 million in damage.[65]

Although there had been sporadic acts of criminality on behalf of animal rights, the first sustained campaign began in 1976, when upon his release from prison, Ronnie Lee, and 30 others created the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) in England. In 1974, Lee was caught attempting to firebomb a medical facility in which experiments on animals were conducted and sentenced to a year in prison. While there, he decided to adopt the organizational structure of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) with its decentralized, small, autonomous cells. Within ten years, ALF had grown into a movement of 1,500 activists and was believed to have been responsible for causing roughly six million pounds sterling in damage annually to British businesses and research facilities. Their exploits gained the organization international notoriety, and in doing so, inspired similar movements worldwide.[66]

The organization's stated goal is to stop animal suffering through 'direct action', which includes illegal activities involving the rescue of animals and inflicting damage on businesses and facilities that use and

abuse animals. There is no formal membership; rather, activists are bound together by an ideology and earn the right to regard themselves as being part of ALF after carrying out illegal direct actions consistent with the organization's guidelines.[67] The first documented ALF operation in the United States occurred in March 1979, when activists, masquerading as lab workers, 'liberated' research animals from the New York University Medical Center.[68]

Arguably, the most potent and enduring campaign of radical animal rights activism was undertaken by a group called Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) whose members launched a concerted effort to shutdown Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS), one of the largest animal-testing companies in the world. Founded in 1999 by Greg Avery and Heather James, SHAC began its campaign in Britain after a video made by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) was broadcasted on British television showed abuse of lab animals inside an HLS facility. As of 2006, SHAC operatives have bombed 11 privately-owned vehicles and attacked numerous private residences of HLS employees. Furthermore, SHAC operatives have also attacked other companies that do business with HLS, including Marsh Ltd, and Stephens Ltd. As a consequence, these firms broke off their business contacts with HLS. Numerous employees of another HLS affiliate, Chiron, were subjected to repeated late-night visits by SHAC activists.[69]

Although the radical environmental movement has caused substantial property damage, it has failed to alter public opinion in any meaningful way. Despite all the damage that the radical environmentalist and animal liberation movements have wrought, researcher Donald Liddick believes that their future does not look bright.[70] As the number of their attacks mounted, the US government took notice. On numerous occasions since the late 1990s, the FBI identified violent eco-extremists and radical animal liberation activists as the most serious domestic terrorism threat in the country.[71] The US government has responded to their vandalism and harassment with new laws aimed at punishing more harshly activists who target animal-testing laboratories and their affiliates. Thirty-two states have followed suit and enacted laws to protect animal-testing enterprises. Furthermore, private industry has responded as well by pooling their resources to discredit their opponents through education, advertising, and political lobbying.[72] In May 2005, John Lewis, the Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI, discussed the threat posed by animal rights extremists and ecoterrorists before a congressional committee. To meet this threat, he announced that the FBI had formed numerous

Joint Terrorism Task Forces with law enforcement agencies around the country.[73]

Despite a lack of demonstrable achievement, the radical environmentalist movement persists. As a consequence of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, and the general decline in the fortunes of Marxism, many young people turned to environmentalism which they sought to combine with a left-wing ideology.[74] Likewise, radical Islam has gained traction as a potent ideology for disaffected Muslims around the world.

The Global Islamic Resistance Movement

The global Islamic resistance movement has endured despite a multinational effort to eradicate it after 9/11. Adapting to the new security environment, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have implemented a more leaderless resistance approach to terrorism and insurgency. Osama bin Laden counseled young Muslims that jihad is an 'individual duty' for every Muslim who is capable of going to war, declaring that 'no other priority, except faith, could be considered before [jihad].'[75] He encouraged Muslims around the world to view their regional conflicts not as isolated, parochial struggles, but rather, as theaters of a larger war in defense of Islam against the West and Zionism. Since the war in Afghanistan began in October 2001, Al- Qaeda has been moving toward a more decentralized approach to terrorism in which loosely affiliated groups that have only slight connections to the central organization commit acts of terrorism of their own volition. Such groups tap into bin Laden's 'franchise' and adopt Al- Qaeda's brand name.[76] Leaderless resistance has now caught on in the jihadist movement.

Radical Islamists, often with only the most tenuous affiliations to terrorist organizations, have demonstrated the capacity to form ad hoc amalgamations of like-minded individuals and converge together to conduct serious acts of terrorism in what Bruce Hoffman referred to as the 'amateurization of terrorism.'[77] As the embassy bombings in Africa and the 9/11 attacks demonstrated, Al-Qaeda has mastered the new terrorist tactic, which researchers at the RAND Corporation have referred to as swarming. This tactical flexibility allows al Qaeda to stealthily take advantage of opportunities. Although not lone wolf terrorism because of the involvement of several operatives, swarming illustrates how like-minded activists can coordinate operations over great distances with little supervision.[78]

A Syrian member of Al-Qaeda, Abu Musab al-Suri, advanced an operational strategy of decentralization to fit contemporary conditions. Shortly before he was apprehended in 2005, he released his 1,600–page

online tome, *A Global Islamic Resistance Call*, which seeks to provoke a global Islamic uprising led by autonomous cells and individual jihadists. In it, he argued that it was folly for the movement to fight from fixed locations because their units could be trapped where Western forces could eventually destroy them. Furthermore, he saw the traditional hierarchical model of a terrorist group as outdated because if authorities could capture one member, then it could put the whole organization at risk. Taking into account these factors, al-Suri proposed a 'jihad of individual terrorism' in which self-contained cells implement their own terrorist template to start their own jihad. What is critical is a shared ideology that serves to create a feeling of common cause and unity of purpose. There would be no formal organizational links between the cells. This model fosters adaptability and creativity in the realm of terrorism. He advises Islamists to focus on jihad in their own countries of residence.[79]

The power of the Internet is integral to al-Suri's strategy of individual terrorism in that it serves as a mobilization tool. To make leaderless resistance orderly, al-Suri recognized that it was necessary to direct such actions through strategic guidance from Al-Qaeda's leaders so that they would work with a unity of purpose. In that regard, Al-Qaeda's leaders have taken his advice, as demonstrated by the cases in which locally recruited cells carry out attacks under the guidance of the parent organization such as in the cases of the Madrid and London attacks.[80]

To date, Marc Sageman has written the definitive study on so-called 'leaderless jihad.' His research stresses the importance of social networks in terrorism. In his initial study, *Understanding Terrorist Networks*, he found that recruitment was essentially bottom-up and self-selecting, rather than a 'seek out and recruit' process. Jihadists tended to spontaneously self-organize through 'bunches of guys' and joined groups with which they had a contact, such as a friend or relative.[81] However, after Operation 'Enduring Freedom', which began in October 2001, Sageman believes that Al-Qaeda has been largely isolated in the Waziristan region and exercises little to no operational direction over affiliate groups that use the Al- Qaeda name. According to Sageman, the Internet is central to the evolution of contemporary terrorism. Specifically, the vast system of active communications systems that include email, listservs, and chat rooms are essential in forging networks. One might intuit that with electronic interaction, a real sense of togetherness is lacking compared with physical meetings, as well as the trust, solidarity, and sense of shared purpose necessary to sustain political and social movements. However, a study conducted by two psychologists, John A. Bargh and

Katelyn Y.A. McKenna, found that the intensity of online relationships can actually rival those developed offline.[82] The egalitarian nature of the Internet allows people to have a greater voice and communicate directly with other people scattered around the globe. The Internet has undermined the traditional hierarchy of terrorist organizations, thus paving the way for 'leaderless jihad'.

Sageman argues that Al-Qaeda's new modus operandi is to advertise demands for terrorist operations on the Internet in the hope that local networks will provide the terrorist actions on their own without guidance from the central organization. Each small terrorist organization may pursue terrorist activities for their own local reasons, and still promote Al-Qaeda's grand strategy. Often, the local group received recognition from Al-Qaeda only after the fact.[83]

A few examples are illustrative of this tactical approach. On 1 August 2007, an Al- Qaeda website promised that a big surprise would soon occur. Although the message did not specify the precise nature of the surprise, the accompanying visual displayed a montage of President George Bush with then-visiting Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf against a backdrop of the White House in flames, thus suggesting that they should be targeted. This was followed on 5 August by a video in which Adam Gadahn, Al-Qaeda's American spokesman, warned that US embassies would be attacked. Such threats have of course become commonplace in Al-Qaeda discourse, but as the terrorism analyst Brian Jenkins observes, highlight the organization's communications strategy. Gadahn's videotape threatened no specific action; rather, it identified targets that ought to be attacked and left it up to jihadists to act on their own initiative.[84] Not long thereafter, Gadahn appeared in another video in which he seemingly commanded sleeper agents to attack nuclear power plants inside the US.[85] Although no such attacks occurred, Jenkins argues that it is still possible for terrorist groups to wreak nuclear terror. By instilling a sense of nuclear anxiety through bin Laden's pronouncements on the suitability of acquiring nuclear weapons, Al-Qaeda has managed to induce nuclear terror in the US.[86]

More threats would follow. In March 2010, Al-Qaeda's media army –as-Sahab –released a videotape in which Gadahn commended Major Nidal Malik Hasan, the Fort Hood Killer, calling him an 'ideal role model' whose lone wolf terrorism should be a model of emulation for other jihadists in America and the West.[87] And in June of 2011, Gadahn appeared in another video titled "Do Not Rely on Others, Take the Task Upon Yourself" in which he urged Muslims in America to take

advantage of lax firearm laws to purchase guns and carry out attacks on their own initiative. Such threats, often conveyed through the new media, are an integral part of Al-Qaeda's grand strategy. Even now dead Osama bin Laden remains an inspirational figure. Arguably, the decentralized orientation of contemporary jihadist networks makes it more difficult for authorities to monitor Al-Qaeda and its affiliates and supporters.[88] The organization's strategic approach could presage a new generation of warfare.

Conclusion

Various political, social, and technological trends have contributed to the miniaturization of terrorist organizations and the increasing frequency of lone wolf terrorism. Geopolitically, the dissolution of the Soviet Union drastically changed the security environment within which terrorists operate. During the Cold War, several Eastern European states were covert supporters of terrorist groups. At the time, supporting terrorism was viewed as furthering the foreign policy objectives of the Soviet bloc.[89] In her classic study, *The Terror Network*, Claire Sterling maintained that for much of the period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, the Soviet Union was at the center of a global terrorist apparatus.[90] Soviet-supported terrorism was designed to advance the influence of the communist superpower. Near the end of the Cold War, however, the Soviet leadership realized that collaboration with terrorists produced few tangible benefits and complicated relations with the United States and the West with which they were seeking to improve relations.[91] Initially after the Cold War, terrorism went into steep decline in large part because several leading terrorist groups lost material support from communist states in the East and also their client states, such as Cuba.[92] Left-wing terrorist groups lost a credible ideology as even the broader political left became concerned more about social and identity issues rather than socialism and economic redistributive policies.

In an era of US-dominated globalization, states presumably would have more to gain by accommodation with the West rather than confrontation. This development militates against the viability of the larger terrorist organizations in that they are more vulnerable to state repression and disruption in that governments are coordinating their counterterrorist efforts with the United States. US-led efforts to counter terrorism both at home and abroad include intelligence sharing, enhanced homeland security, military action, and interstate cooperation.

Despite differences over Iraq, after 9/11, governments have increased coordination of their counterterrorist efforts.[93] This development has made it more difficult for the traditional terrorist networks to operate. Increasingly, the United States is promoting an international agenda that seeks to create a less congenial world for terrorism.

Despite increased repression and more pervasive monitoring, new technology dovetails with the leaderless resistance approach. Enhanced communication capabilities allow for new flexible models of organization that eschew traditional leadership structures. Moreover, they enable collaboration by disparate actors that are geographically dispersed. Such techniques are applied in the realm of terrorism in the form of swarming tactics. Furthermore, the rise of the so-called 'new media' has led to a diffusion so-called soft power around that world that has the potential to empower groups and individuals who have traditionally not had much influence in the marketplace of ideas. As *Newsweek* editor Fareed Zakaria observed, the new face of terror consists of local groups across the world connected by a global ideology.[94] Today, we are witnessing the age of the 'super-empowered individual' who, if adequately armed with a weapon of mass destruction (WMD), could wreak unprecedented havoc on the world.[95]

The case studies examined in this study –the American extreme right, the anti-globalization movement, the radical environmentalist movement, and militant Islam –increasingly see their struggles in global terms. For obvious reasons, the radical environmentalist movement sees the entire planet as its focus of concern. A disparate coalition of anarchists and left-wing activists seek to bring about an alternative globalization based on social justice. And just as Osama bin Laden encouraged Islamists around the world to view their regional conflicts not as isolated, parochial battles, but rather as theaters of a larger war in the defense of Islam against the West and Zionism, some elements of the extreme right view their individual nationalist movements as part of a larger struggle for white racial survival against a rising tide of nonwhite demographic expansion, said to be orchestrated by the forces of globalization and international Judaism. Here the Internet has been important, allowing disparate groups to spread their message and exchange ideas. This development has resulted in a potentially larger pool of recruits from which these movements can recruit insofar as they are more global in orientation, thus they can take advantage of the 'long-tail' phenomenon.

Chris Anderson of *Wired* magazine developed the concept of the 'long tail' to explain how in the new business environment with platforms such as Amazon, firms can profit by selling previously hard-to-

find items to a larger number of customers instead of selling only a smaller variety of popular items in large quantities. Likewise, as Thomas Rid and Marc Hecker observed in their study *War 2.0: Irregular Warfare in the Information Age*, a similar logic applies to extremist and terrorist groups in the sense that they do not require a large popular following to survive over time. A relatively low number of highly-motivated, partly self-recruited, and geographically dispersed followers can share an extremist cause without broader popular appeal, thus making niche terrorism possible. As a consequence, the critical mass of people necessary to pass the threshold of a viable terrorist group has been drastically lowered, but paradoxically, this development makes it more difficult for the group to attain power. Although it is now easier for insurgents and terrorists to enter the game, without broad-based support, it is more difficult for them to evolve into a credible political force that is capable of taking over a state. As modern terrorists groups tend to move away from popular appeal, it becomes less likely that they could consolidate and assume political power. Because of their internal weakness, they cannot reasonably be expected to defeat their conventional and democratic opponents who are much stronger, militarily, economically, culturally, and politically, yet, on the other hand, they probably cannot be entirely defeated either.[96]

The rise of leaderless resistance is in some ways symptomatic of the failure of terrorist groups to adapt to the contemporary security environment. In a sense, the current incarnation of leaderless resistance is not unlike the approach used by the anarchist movement around the turn of the 20th century whose members used bombs and assassinations to disrupt governments in the West. With new technology, however, it is now possible that terrorist groups could evolve into more resilient entities not unlike transnational criminal syndicates have over the past two decades. A significant trend in contemporary international politics is the growing nexus between terrorism and organized crime.[97] To date, transnational criminal syndicates appear to have adapted better to the changing international system as they thrive on international mobility.[98]

Despite its limitations, terrorism in the West appears to be moving in the direction of leaderless resistance. Rather than a rigid dichotomy between lone wolves and large, established groups, the trend could be conceptualized as a continuum with more and more terrorist activities committed by those on the lone wolf side of the spectrum.[99] Although the state's capacity to monitor is substantial, individuals are still able to operate under the radar screen and commit violence with little predictability. Leaderless resistance can serve as a catalyst spurring others to

move from thought to action. The tactic can produce a demonstration effect in that violence spawns copycats.[100] Extraordinary examples of leaderless resistance serve to recruit new members to the network.[101]

Several factors make leaderless resistance a potentially effective strategy. First, the work of above ground groups to raise ideological consciousness among their followers can also motivate the underground radicals in the movement. Second, lone wolf terrorists do not require expensive or sophisticated equipment, as evidenced by the DC snipers who used a semi-automatic rifle and a 1990 Chevrolet Caprice to terrorize the area. Third, leaderless resistance makes the penetration of terrorist movements difficult because lone wolves work alone and have little or no information on other activists that can be divulged. Fourth, the mass media can amplify the exploits of lone wolves. Finally, open societies make leaderless resistance easier to carry out because there are numerous soft targets.[102]

To date, most episodes of leaderless resistance have been ill-planned and haphazard. Some of the perpetrators could be aptly described as Berserkers who basically went off the deep end.[103] Proponents of the concept often assume that lone wolves are calculating and devote careful planning for their operations, but so far, these instances have been rare. Some advocates of leaderless resistance like to point out that history is replete with examples of political organizations that began with modest numbers but eventually developed into powerful mass movements through the initial efforts of a small, committed core of activists. Stealthy lone wolves, who are disciplined in their operations, could have the potential to cause sabotage as the number of soft targets in society increases. As the concept gains currency, and with the increasing availability of weapons of mass destruction, it is conceivable that a new breed of more dangerous lone wolves could emerge in the future.

The case of Anders Behring Breivik illustrates this threat. According to his online political manifesto, Breivik spent nine years methodically planning his bombing attack on government offices in Oslo and the subsequent shooting spree on the island of Utøya. The new media figured prominently in his campaign of terror. Shortly before he began his attacks, he uploaded his 1,500-page electronic book—2083: A European Declaration of Independence—on the Internet. The notoriety stemming from his attack, he predicted, would serve as "marketing" ad for his manifesto, thus assuring that there would be substantial interest in its contents. As the frequency of sporadic episodes of lone wolf terrorism in the news headlines suggest, leaderless resistance has become the most common tactical approach of political violence in the West. Concomi-

tant with this trend, as new technology continues to spread the capabilities for developing weapons of mass destruction, just a few angry people now have the potential to inflict unprecedented destruction.

NOTES

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95 Thomas P.M. Barnett, *Great Powers: America and the World After Bush* (New York: Putnam 2009) p.295. Thomas Friedman first advanced the notion of the 'super-empowered individual'. See Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Anchor 2000).
96 Thomas Rid and Marc Hecker, *War 2.0: Irregular Warfare in the Information Age* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger Security International 2009) pp.219–20.
97 Rather than cooperation between the two entities, some terrorist groups are acquiring more of the attributes of organized crime. Thomas M. Sanderson, 'Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines', *The SAIS Review* 24/1 (Winter–Spring 2004) pp.49–61.
98 Usually, organized crime groups are more effective in maintaining internal discipline. What is more, their financial resources enable them to corrupt officials and avoid prosecution. Finally, insofar as these groups often provide illicit goods and services that are socially acceptable to a substantial portion of the population, they provoke less repression than terrorist groups. These observations are made in John Ross, *Unintended Consequences* (St. Louis, MO: Accurate Press 1996) pp.716–17.
99 For example, using FBI data on terrorism, Smith and Damphousse found that prior to the implementation of the Attorney General's guidelines on investigating dissident and terrorist groups, the average number of members indicted in each right-wing terrorist group was 9.4 persons. In the post-guidelines era (after 1976), that figure had dropped to 5.8 persons. A similar pattern was evident for international terrorist groups operating in the US with a figure of 6 members in the pre-guidelines era and a figure of 3 in the post-guidelines era. Brent L. Smith and Kelly R. Damphousse, *American Terrorism Study: Patterns of Behavior, Investigation, and Prosecution of American Terrorists*. (Rockville, MD: National Institute of Justice 2002) p.6.
100 Pressman, 'Leaderless Resistance: The Next Threat?' (note 13) p.422.
101 Simson L. Garfinkel, 'Leaderless resistance today,', 2003, http://131.193.153.231/www/issues/issue8_3/garfinkel/index.html.
102 Pressman, 'Leaderless Resistance: The Next Threat?' (note 13) p.424.
103 Jonathan R. White, *Terrorism: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth 2002) p.33.