

Mother Jones

THE IRAQ EFFECT

THE WAR IN IRAQ AND ITS IMPACT ON THE WAR ON TERRORISM

By Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank

Research fellows at the Center on Law and Security at the NYU School of Law. Bergen is also a senior fellow at the New America Foundation in Washington, D.C.

“IF WE WERE NOT FIGHTING and destroying this enemy in Iraq, they would not be idle. They would be plotting and killing Americans across the world and within our own borders. By fighting these terrorists in Iraq, Americans in uniform are defeating a direct threat to the American people.” So said President Bush on November 30, 2005, refining his earlier call to “bring them on.” Jihadist terrorists, the administration’s argument went, would be drawn to Iraq like moths to a flame, and would perish there rather than wreak havoc elsewhere in the world.

The president’s argument conveyed two important assumptions: first, that the threat of jihadist terrorism to U.S. interests would have been greater without the war in Iraq, and second, that the war is reducing the overall global pool of terrorists. However, the White House has never cited any evidence for either of these assumptions, and none appears to be publicly available. The administration’s own National Intelligence Estimate on “Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States,” circulated within the government in April 2006 and partially declassified in October, states that “the Iraq war has become the ‘cause celebre’ for jihadists...and is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives.”

Yet administration officials have continued to suggest that there is no evidence any greater jihadist threat exists as a result of the Iraq War. “Are more terrorists being created in the world?” then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld rhetorically asked during a press conference in September. “We don’t know. The world doesn’t know. There are not good metrics to determine how many people are being trained in a radical madrasa school in some country.” In January 2007 Director

of National Intelligence John Negroponte in congressional testimony stated that he was “not certain” that the Iraq War had been a recruiting tool for Al Qaeda and played down the likely impact of the war on jihadists worldwide: “I wouldn’t say there has been a widespread growth in Islamic extremism beyond Iraq. I really wouldn’t.”

Indeed, though what we will call “The Iraq Effect” is a crucial matter for U.S. national security, we have found no statistical documentation of its existence and gravity, at least in the public domain. In this report, we have undertaken what we believe to be the first such study, using information from the world’s premier database on global terrorism. The results are being published for the first time by *Mother Jones*, the news and investigative magazine, as part of a broader “Iraq 101” package in the magazine’s March/April 2007 issue.

OUR STUDY SHOWS that the Iraq War has generated a stunning sevenfold increase in the yearly rate of fatal jihadist attacks, amounting to literally hundreds of additional terrorist attacks and thousands of civilian lives lost; even when terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan is excluded, fatal attacks in the rest of the world have increased by more than one-third.

We are not making the argument that without the Iraq War, jihadist terrorism would not exist, but our study shows that the Iraq conflict has greatly increased the spread of the Al Qaeda ideological virus, as shown by a rising number of terrorist attacks in the past three years from London to Kabul, and from Madrid to the Red Sea.

In our study we focused on the following questions:

- Has jihadist terrorism gone up or down around the world since the invasion of Iraq?
- What has been the trend if terrorist incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan (the military fronts of the “war on terrorism”) are excluded?
- Has terrorism explicitly directed at the United States and its allies also increased?

In order to zero in on The Iraq Effect, we focused on the rate of terrorist attacks in two time periods: September 12, 2001, to March 20, 2003 (the day of the Iraq invasion), and March 21, 2003, to September 30, 2006. Extending the data set before 9/11 would risk distorting the results, because the rate of attacks by jihadist groups jumped considerably after 9/11 as jihadist terrorists took inspiration from the events of that terrible day.

We first determined which terrorist organizations should be classified as jihadist. We included in this group Sunni extremist groups affiliated with or sympathetic to the ideology of Al Qaeda. We decided to exclude terrorist attacks by Palestinian groups, as they depend largely on factors particular to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Our study draws its data from the MIPT-RAND Terrorism database (available at terrorismknowledgebase.org), which is widely considered to be the best publicly available database on terrorism incidents. RAND defines a terrorist attack as an attack on a civilian entity designed to promote fear or alarm and further a particular political agenda. In our study we only included attacks that caused at least one fatality and were attributed by RAND to a known jihadist group. In some terrorist attacks, and this

is especially the case in Iraq, RAND has not been able to attribute a particular attack to a known jihadist group. Therefore our study likely understates the extent of jihadist terrorism in Iraq and around the world.

Our study yields one resounding finding: The rate of terrorist attacks around the world by jihadist groups and the rate of fatalities in those attacks increased dramatically after the invasion of Iraq. Globally there was a 607 percent rise in the average yearly incidence of attacks (28.3 attacks per year before and 199.8 after) and a 237 percent rise in the average fatality rate (from 501 to 1,689 deaths per year). A large part of this rise occurred in Iraq, which accounts for fully half of the global total of jihadist terrorist attacks in the post-Iraq War period. But even excluding Iraq, the average yearly number of jihadist terrorist attacks and resulting fatalities still rose sharply around the world by 265 percent and 58 percent respectively.

And even when attacks in both Afghanistan and Iraq (the two countries that together account for 80 percent of attacks and 67 percent of deaths since the invasion of Iraq) are excluded, there has still been a significant rise in jihadist terrorism elsewhere—a 35 percent increase in the number of jihadist terrorist attacks outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, from 27.6 to 37 a year, with a 12 percent rise in fatalities from 496 to 554 per year.

Of course, just because jihadist terrorism has risen in the period after the invasion of Iraq, it does not follow that events in Iraq itself caused the change. For example, a rise in attacks in the Kashmir conflict and the Chechen separatist war against Russian forces may have nothing to do with the war in Iraq. But the most direct test of The Iraq Effect—whether the United States and its allies have suffered more jihadist terrorism after the invasion than before—shows that the rate of jihadist attacks on Western interests and citizens around the world (outside of Afghanistan and Iraq) has risen by a quarter, from 7.2 to 9 a year, while the yearly fatality rate in these attacks has increased by 4 percent from 191 to 198.

One of the few positive findings of our study is that only 18 American civilians

(not counting civilian contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan) have been killed by jihadist groups since the war in Iraq began. But that number is still significantly higher than the four American civilians who were killed in attacks attributed to jihadist groups in the period between 9/11 and the Iraq War. It was the capture and killing of much of Al Qaeda's leadership after 9/11 and the breakup of its training camp facilities in Afghanistan—not the war in Iraq—that prevented Al Qaeda from successfully

Globally, the yearly number of jihadist attacks and fatalities has risen dramatically since the invasion of Iraq.

launching attacks on American targets on the scale it did in the years before 9/11.

Also undermining the argument that Al Qaeda and like-minded groups are being distracted from plotting against Western targets are the dangerous, anti-American plots that have arisen since the start of the Iraq War. Jihadist terrorists have attacked key American allies since the Iraq conflict began, mounting multiple bombings in London that killed 52 in July 2005, and attacks in Madrid in 2004 that killed 191. Shehzad Tanweer, one of the London bombers, stated in his videotaped suicide “will,” “What have you witnessed now is only the beginning of a string of attacks that will continue and become stronger until you pull your forces out of Afghanistan and Iraq.” There have been six jihadist attacks on the home soil of the United States’ NATO allies (including Turkey) in the period after the invasion of Iraq, whereas there were none in the 18 months following 9/11; and, of course, the plan uncovered in London in August 2006 to smuggle liquid explosives onto U.S. airliners, had it succeeded, would have killed thousands.

Al Qaeda has not let the Iraq War distract it from targeting the United States and her allies. In a January 19, 2006, audiotape, Osama bin Laden himself refuted President Bush’s argument that Iraq had distracted and diverted Al Qaeda: “The reality shows that the war against America and its allies has not remained limited to Iraq, as he claims, but rather, that Iraq has become

a source and attraction and recruitment of qualified people.... As for the delay in similar [terrorist] operations in America, [the] operations are being prepared, and you will witness them, in your own land, as soon as preparations are complete.”

Ayman al Zawahiri echoed bin Laden’s words in a March 4, 2006, videotape broadcast by Al Jazeera calling for jihadists to launch attacks on the home soil of Western countries: “[Muslims have to] inflict losses on the crusader West, especially to its economic infrastructure, with strikes that would make it bleed for years. The strikes on New York, Washington, Madrid, and London are the best examples.”

ONE MEASURE of the impact of the Iraq War is the precipitous drop in public support for the United States in Muslim countries. Jordan, a key U.S. ally, saw popular approval for the United States drop from 25 percent in 2002 to 1 percent in 2003. In Lebanon during the same period, favorable views of the United States dropped from 30 percent to 15 percent, and in the world’s largest Muslim country, Indonesia, favorable views plummeted from 61 percent to 15 percent. Disliking the United States does not make you a terrorist, but clearly the pool of Muslims who dislike the United States has grown by hundreds of millions since the Iraq War began. The United States’ plummeting popularity does not suggest active popular support for jihadist terrorists, but it does imply some sympathy with their anti-American posture, which means a significant swath of the Muslim population cannot be relied on as an effective party in counter-terrorism/insurgency measures. And so, popular contempt for U.S. policy has become a force multiplier for Islamist militants. The Iraq War has also encouraged Muslim youth around the world to join jihadist groups, not necessarily directly tied to Al Qaeda but often motivated by a similar ideology. The Iraq War allowed Al Qaeda, which was on the ropes in 2002 after the United States had captured or killed two-thirds of its leadership, to reinvent itself as a broader movement because Al Qaeda’s central message—that the United States is at war with Islam—was judged by significant numbers of Muslims to have been corrobo-

rated by the war in Iraq. And compounding this, the wide dissemination of the exploits of jihadist groups in Iraq following the invasion energized potential and actual jihadists across the world.

How exactly has The Iraq Effect played out in different parts of the world? The effect has not been uniform. Europe, the Arab world, and Afghanistan all saw major rises in jihadist terrorism in the period after the invasion of Iraq, while Pakistan and India and the Chechnya/Russia front saw only smaller increases in jihadist terrorism. And in Southeast Asia, attacks and killings by jihadist groups fell by over 60 percent in the period after the Iraq War. The strength or weakness of The Iraq Effect on jihadist terrorism in a particular country seems to be influenced by four factors: (1) if the country itself has troops in Iraq; (2) geographical proximity to Iraq; (3) the degree of identification with Iraq's Arabs felt in the country; and (4) the level of exchanges of ideas or personnel with Iraqi jihadist groups. This may explain why jihadist groups in Europe, Arab countries, and Afghanistan were more affected by the Iraq War than groups in other regions. Europe, unlike Kashmir, Chechnya, and Southeast Asia, for example, contains several countries that are part of the coalition in Iraq. It is relatively geographically close to the Arab world and has a large Arab-Muslim diaspora from which jihadists have recruited.

European intelligence services are deeply concerned about the effect of the Iraq War. For example, Dame Eliza Mannigham-Buller, the head of Britain's MI5, stated on November 10, 2006, "In Iraq, attacks are regularly videoed and the footage is downloaded onto the Internet [and] chillingly we see the results here. Young teenagers are being groomed to be suicide bombers. We are aware of numerous plots to kill people and damage our economy...30 that we know of. [The] threat is serious, is growing, and, I believe, will be with us for a generation." Startlingly, a recent poll found that a quarter of British Muslims believe that the July 7, 2005, London bombings were justifiable because of British foreign policy, bearing out Dame Eliza's concern about a new generation of radicals in the United Kingdom.

While Islamist militants in Europe are mobilized by a series of grievances such as Palestine, Afghanistan, the Kashmir conflict, and Chechnya, no issue has resonat-

ed more in radical circles and on Islamist websites than the war in Iraq. This can be seen in the skyrocketing rate of jihadist terrorist attacks around the Arab world outside of Iraq. There have been 37 attacks in Arab countries outside of Iraq since the invasion, while there were only 3 in the period between 9/11 and March 2003. The rate of attacks in Arab countries jumped by 445 percent since the Iraq invasion, while the rate of killings rose by 783 percent. The November 9, 2005, bombings of three American hotels in Amman, Jordan, that killed 60, an operation directed by Abu Musab al Zarqawi's Al Qaeda in Iraq network, was the most direct manifestation of The Iraq Effect in the Arab world. Saudi Arabia, in particular, has seen an upsurge in jihadist terrorism since the U.S. invasion of Iraq. There were no jihadist terrorist attacks between 9/11 and the Iraq War but 12 in the period since. The reason for the surge in terrorism was a decision taken by Al Qaeda's Saudi branch in the spring of 2003 to launch a wave of attacks (primarily at Western targets) to undermine the Saudi royal family. These attacks were initiated on May 12, 2003, with the bombing of Western compounds in Riyadh, killing 34, including 10 Americans. While Saudi authorities believe that planning and training for the operation predated the war in Iraq, the timing of the attack, just weeks after the U.S. invasion, is striking.

The fact that the Iraq War radicalized some young Saudis is underlined by studies showing that more Saudis have conducted suicide operations in Iraq than any other nationality. For instance, Mohammed Hafez, a visiting professor at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, in a study of the 101 identified suicide attackers in Iraq from March 2003 to February 2006, found that more than 40 percent were Saudi. This jihadist energy was not just transferred over the Saudi border into Iraq. It also contributed to attacks in the Kingdom. The group that beheaded the American contractor Paul Johnson in Riyadh in June 2004 called itself the "Al Fallujah brigade of Al Qaeda" and claimed that it had carried out the killing in part to avenge the actions of "disbelievers" in Iraq. In January 2004 Al Qaeda's Saudi affiliate launched *Al Battar*, an online training magazine specifically directed at young Saudis interested in fighting their regime. The achievements of jihadists in

Iraq figured prominently in its pages. Indeed, a contributor to the first issue of *Al Battar* argued that the Iraq War had made jihad "a commandment" for Saudi Arabians "[because] the Islamic nation is today in acute conflict with the Crusaders."

The Iraq War had a strong impact in other Arab countries too. Daily images aired by Al Jazeera and other channels of suffering Iraqis enraged the Arab street and strengthened the hands of radicals everywhere. In Egypt, the Iraq War has contributed to a recent wave of attacks by small, self-generated groups. A Sinai-based jihadist group carried out coordinated bombing attacks on Red Sea resorts popular with Western tourists at Taba in October 2004, at Sharm el-Sheikh in July 2005, and at Dahab in April 2006, killing a total of more than 120.

One of the cell's members, Younis Eliaan Abu Jarir, a taxi driver whose job was to ferry the group around, stated in a confession offered as evidence in court that "they convinced me of the need for holy war against the Jews, Americans, Italians, and other nationalities that participated in the occupation of Iraq." Osama Rushdi, a former spokesman of the Egyptian terrorist group Gamma Islamiyya now living in London, told us that while attacks in the Sinai were partly directed at the Egyptian regime, they appeared to be primarily anti-Western in motivation: "The Iraq War contributed to the negative feelings of the Sinai group. Before the Iraq War, most Egyptians did not have a negative feeling towards American policy. Now almost all are opposed to American policy."

SINCE THE INVASION OF IRAQ, Afghanistan has suffered 219 jihadist terrorist attacks that can be attributed to a particular group, resulting in the deaths of 802 civilians. The fact that the Taliban only conducted its first terrorist attacks in September 2003, a few months after the invasion of Iraq, is significant. International forces had already been stationed in the country for two years before the Taliban began to specifically target the U.S.-backed Karzai government and civilians sympathetic to it. This points to a link between events in Iraq and the initiation of the Taliban's terrorist campaign in Afghanistan.

True, local dynamics form part of the explanation for the resurgence of the Taliban

in Afghanistan. But the use of terrorism, particularly suicide attacks, by the Taliban is an innovation drawn from the Iraqi theater. Hekmat Karzai, an Afghan terrorism researcher, points out that suicide bombings were virtually unknown in Afghanistan until 2005. In 2006, Karzai says, there were 118 such attacks, more than there had been in the entire history of the country. Internet sites have helped spread the tactics of Iraqi jihadists. In 2005 the “Media Committee of the Al Qaeda Mujahideen in Afghanistan” launched an online magazine called *Vanguards of Kharasan*, which includes articles on what Afghan fighters can learn from Coalition and jihadist strategies in Iraq. Abdul Majid Abdul Majed, a contributor to the April 2006 issue of the magazine, argued for an expansion in suicide operations, citing the effectiveness of jihadist operations in Iraq.

Mullah Dadullah, a key Taliban commander, gave an interview to Al Jazeera in 2006 in which he explained how the Iraq War has influenced the Taliban. Dadullah noted that “we have ‘give and take’ with the mujahideen in Iraq.” Hamid Mir, a Pakistani journalist who is writing bin Laden’s biography, told us that young men traveled from the Afghan province of Khost to get “on-the-job training” in Iraq in 2004. “They came back with lots of CDs which were full of military actions against U.S. troops in the Mosul, Fallujah, and Baghdad areas. I think suicide bombing was introduced in Afghanistan and Pakistan after local boys came back after spending some time in Iraq. I met a Taliban commander, Mullah Mannan, last year in Zabul who told me that he was trained in Iraq by Zarqawi along with many Pakistani tribals.”

Propaganda circulating in Afghanistan and Pakistan about American “atrocities” and jihadist “heroics” has also energized the Taliban, encouraging a previously somewhat isolated movement to see itself as part of a wider struggle. Our study found a striking correlation in how terrorist campaigns intensified in Iraq and Afghanistan. The rate of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan gathered pace in the summer of 2005, a half year after a similar increase in Iraq, and in 2006 the rate of attacks in both countries rose in tandem to new, unprecedented levels.

While the Iraq War has had a strong effect on the rise in terrorism in Afghanistan, it appears to have played less of a role on

jihadists operating in Pakistan and India, though terrorism did rise in those countries following the invasion of Iraq. (Of course, neither Pakistan nor India has foreign troops on its soil, which accounts, in part, for the high terrorism figures in Afghanistan.) The rate of jihadist attacks rose by 21 percent while the fatality rate rose by 19 percent. There were 52 attacks after the Iraq invasion, killing 489 civilians, while there were 19 in the period before, killing 182. The local dynamics of the Kashmir conflict, tensions between India and Pakistan, and the resurfacing of the Taliban in eastern Pakistan likely played a large role here. That said, there is evidence that the Iraq War did energize jihadists in Pakistan. Hamid Mir says, “Iraq not only radicalized the Pakistani tribals [near the Afghan border] but it offered them the opportunity for them to go to Iraq via Iran to get on-the-job training.”

There is also evidence that the Iraq War had some impact in other areas of Pakistan. In the summer of 2004, Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the head of the Kashmiri militant group Lashkar-e-Toiba, told followers in Lahore, “Islam is in grave danger, and the mujahideen are fighting to keep its glory. They are fighting the forces of evil in Iraq in extremely difficult circumstances. We should send mujahideen from Pakistan to help them.” And Pakistan, inasmuch as it has become Al Qaeda’s new base for training and planning attacks, has become the location where significant numbers of would-be jihadists—including some young British Pakistanis such as the London suicide bombers, radicalized in part by the Iraq War—have traveled to learn bomb-making skills.

In Russia and Chechnya, the Iraq War appears to have had less of an impact than on other jihadist fronts. This is unsurprising given the fact that jihadist groups in the region are preoccupied by a separatist war against the Russian military. Whilst following the invasion of Iraq there was a rise in the number of attacks by Chechen groups that share a similar ideology with Al Qaeda, the total rate of fatalities did not go up. The Iraq War does seem to have diverted some jihadists from the Russian/Chechen front: Arab fighters who might have previously gone to Chechnya now have a cause at their own doorstep, while funds from Arab donors increasingly have gone to the

Iraqi jihad.

Southeast Asia has been the one region in the world in which jihadist terrorism has declined significantly in the period since the invasion of Iraq. There was a 67 percent drop in the rate of attacks (from 10.5 to 3.5 attacks per year) in the post-invasion period and a 69 percent drop in the rate of fatalities (from 201 to 62 fatalities per year). And there has been no bombing on the scale of the October 2002 Bali nightclub attack that killed more than 200. However, jihadist terrorism in Southeast Asia has declined in spite, not because of, the Iraq War. The U.S. invasion of Iraq was deeply unpopular in the region, as demonstrated by the poll finding that only 15 percent of Indonesians had a favorable view of the United States in 2003. But the negative impact of the Iraq War on public opinion was mitigated by U.S. efforts to aid the region in the wake of the devastating tsunami of December 2004—Pew opinion surveys have shown that the number of those with favorable views toward the United States in Indonesia crept above 30 percent in 2005 and 2006.

However, the main reason for the decline of jihadist terrorism in Southeast Asia has been the successful crackdown by local authorities on jihadist groups and their growing unpopularity with the general population. The August 2003 capture of Hambali, Jemaa Islamiya’s operational commander, was key to degrading the group’s capacity to launch attacks as was the arrest of hundreds of Jemaa Islamiya and Abu Sayyaf operatives in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore in the years after the October 2002 Bali bombings. Those arrested included most of those who planned the Bali attacks, as well as former instructors at Jemaa Islamiya camps and individuals involved in financing attacks. And in November 2005 Indonesian security services killed Jemaa Islamiya master bomber Azhari bin Husin in a shoot-out. The second wave of Bali attacks in 2005 killed mostly Indonesians and created a popular backlash against jihadist groups in Indonesia, degrading their ability to recruit operatives. And Muslim leaders such as Masdar Farid Masudi, the deputy leader of the country’s largest Islamic group, condemned the bombings: “If the perpetrators are Muslims, their sentences must be multiplied because they have tar-

nished the sacredness of their religion and smeared its followers worldwide.”

OUR SURVEY SHOWS that the Iraq conflict has motivated jihadists around the world to see their particular struggle as part of a wider global jihad fought on behalf of the Islamic ummah, the global community of Muslim believers. The Iraq War had a strong impact in jihadist circles in the Arab world and Europe, but also on the Taliban, which previously had been quite insulated from events elsewhere in the Muslim world. By energizing the jihadist groups, the Iraq conflict acted as a catalyst for the increasing globalization of the jihadist cause, a trend that should be deeply troubling for American policymakers. In the late 1990s, bin Laden pushed a message of a global jihad and attracted recruits from around the Muslim world to train and fight in Afghanistan. The Iraq War has made bin Laden’s message of global struggle even more persuasive to militants. Over the past three years, Iraq has attracted thousands of foreign fighters who have been responsible for the majority of suicide attacks in the country. Those attacks have had an enormous strategic impact; for instance, getting the United Nations to pull out of Iraq and sparking the Iraqi civil war.

Emblematic of the problem is Muriel Degauque, a 38-year-old Belgian woman who on November 9, 2005, near the town of Baquba in central Iraq, detonated a bomb as she drove past an American patrol. In the bomb crater, investigators found travel documents that showed that she had arrived in Iraq from Belgium just a few weeks earlier with her Moroccan-Belgian husband, Hissam Goris. The couple had been recruited by “Al Qaeda in Iraq.” Goris would die the following day, shot by American forces as he prepared to launch a suicide attack near Fallujah.

The story of Muriel Degauque and her husband is part of a trend that Harvard terrorism researcher Assaf Moghadam terms the “globalization of martyrdom.” The London suicide bombings in July 2005 revealed the surprising willingness of four British citizens to die to protest the United Kingdom’s role in the Coalition in Iraq;

Muriel Degauque, for her part, was willing to die for the jihadist cause in a country in which she was a stranger.

This challenges some existing conceptions of the motivations behind suicide attacks. In 2005 University of Chicago political scientist Robert Pape published a much-commented-upon study of suicide bombing, “Dying to Win,” in which he used a mass of data about previous suicide bombing campaigns to argue that they principally occurred “to compel modern

The Iraq conflict has been a catalyst for the globalization of jihad, motivating jihadists to see their struggles as part of a global effort.

democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland.” (Of course, terrorism directed against totalitarian regimes rarely occurs because such regimes are police states and are unresponsive to public opinion.) Pape also argued that while religion might aggravate campaigns of suicide terrorism, such campaigns had also been undertaken by secular groups, most notably the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, whose most spectacular success was the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by a female suicide attacker in 1991.

Pape’s findings may explain the actions and motivations of terrorist groups in countries such as Sri Lanka, but his principal claim that campaigns of suicide terrorism are generally nationalist struggles to liberate occupied lands that have little to do with religious belief does not survive contact with the reality of what is going on today in Iraq. The most extensive suicide campaign in history is being conducted in Iraq largely by foreigners animated by the deeply held religious belief that they must liberate a Muslim land from the “infidel” occupiers.

While Iraqis make up the great bulk of the insurgents, several studies have shown that the suicide attackers in Iraq are generally foreigners, while only a small proportion are Iraqi. (Indeed, the most feared terrorist leader in Iraq until his death earlier this year, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, was a Jordanian.) The Israeli researcher Reuven Paz, using information posted on Al Qa-

eda-linked websites between October 2004 and March 2005, found that of the 33 suicide attacks listed, 23 were conducted by Saudis, and only 1 by an Iraqi. Similarly, in June 2005 the Search for International Terrorist Entities (SITE) Institute of Washington, D.C., found by tracking both jihadist websites and media reports that of the 199 Sunni extremists who had died in Iraq either in suicide attacks or in action against Coalition or Iraqi forces, 104 were from Saudi Arabia and only 21 from Iraq.

The rest were predominantly from countries around the Middle East. And Mohammed Hafez in his previously cited study of the 101 “known” suicide bombers in Iraq found that while 44 were Saudi and 8 were from Italy (!), only 7 were from Iraq.

In congressional testimony this past November, CIA Director General Michael Hayden said that “an overwhelming percentage of the suicide bombers are foreign.” A senior U.S. military intelligence official told us that a worrisome recent trend is the rising number of North Africans who have joined the ranks of foreign fighters in Iraq, whose number General Hayden pegged at 1,300 during his November congressional testimony. A Saudi official also confirmed to us the rising number of North Africans who are being drawn into the Iraq War.

THE GLOBALIZATION of jihad and martyrdom, accelerated to a significant degree by the Iraq War, has some disquieting implications for American security in the future. First, it has energized jihadist groups generally; second, not all foreign fighters attracted to Iraq will die there. In fact there is evidence that some jihadists are already leaving Iraq to operate elsewhere. Saudi Arabia has made a number of arrests of fighters coming back from Iraq, and Jordanian intelligence sources say that 300 fighters have returned to Jordan from Iraq. As far away as Belgium, authorities have indicated that Younis Lekili, an alleged member of the cell that recruited Muriel Degauque, had previously traveled to fight in Iraq, where he lost his leg. (Lekili is awaiting trial in Belgium.) German, French, and Dutch intelligence officials have estimated that there are dozens of their citizens returning from the Iraq theater, and some

appear to have been determined to carry out attacks on their return to Europe. For example, French police arrested Hamid Bach, a French citizen of Moroccan descent, in June 2005 in Montpellier, several months after he returned from a staging camp for Iraq War recruits in Syria. According to French authorities, Bach's handlers there instructed him to assist with plotting terrorist attacks in Italy. Back in France, Bach is alleged to have bought significant quantities of hydrogen peroxide and to have looked up details on explosives and detonators online. (Bach is awaiting trial in France.)

This "blowback" trend will greatly increase when the war eventually winds down in Iraq. In the short term the countries most at risk are those whose citizens have traveled to fight in Iraq, in particular Arab countries bordering Iraq. Jamal Khashoggi, a leading Saudi expert on jihadist groups, told us that "while Iraq brought new blood into the Al Qaeda organization in Saudi Arabia, this was at a time when the network was being dismantled. Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia could not accommodate these recruits so they sent them to Iraq to train them, motivate them, and prepare them for a future wave of attacks in the Kingdom. It is a deep worry to Saudi authorities that Saudis who have gone to Iraq will come back." That's a scenario for which Khashoggi says Saudi security forces are painstakingly preparing.

Several U.S. citizens have tried to involve themselves in the Iraq jihad. In December an American was arrested in Cairo, Egypt, accused of being part of a cell plotting terrorist attacks in Iraq. And in February 2006 three Americans from Toledo, Ohio, were arrested for allegedly plotting to kill U.S. military personnel in Iraq. According to the FBI, one of these individuals, Mohammad Zaki Amawi, was in contact with an Arab jihadist group sending fighters to Iraq and tried unsuccessfully to cross the border into Iraq. However, to date there is no evidence of Americans actually fighting in Iraq so the number of returnees to the United States is likely to be small. The larger risk is that jihadists will migrate

from Iraq to Western countries, a trend that will be accelerated if, as happened following the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, those fighters are not allowed to return to their home countries.

Already terrorist groups in Iraq may be in a position to start sending funds to other jihadist fronts. According to a U.S. government report leaked to the *New York Times* in November 2006, the fact that insurgent and terrorist groups are raising up to \$200 million a year from various illegal

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activities such as kidnapping and oil theft in Iraq means that they "may have surplus funds with which to support other terrorist organizations outside Iraq." Indeed, a letter from Al Qaeda's No. 2, Ayman al Zawahiri, to Al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi in July 2005 contained this revealing request: "Many of the [funding] lines have been cut off. Because of this we need a payment while new lines are being opened. So if you're capable of sending a payment of approximately one hundred thousand we'll be very grateful to you."

The "globalization of martyrdom" prompted by the Iraq War has not only attracted foreign fighters to die in Iraq (we record 148 suicide-terrorist attacks in Iraq credited to an identified jihadist group) but has also encouraged jihadists to conduct many more suicide operations elsewhere. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, there has been a 246 percent rise in the rate of suicide attacks (6 before and 47 after) by jihadist groups outside of Iraq and a 24 percent increase in the corresponding fatality rate. Even excluding Afghanistan, there has been a 150 percent rise in the rate of suicide attacks and a 14 percent increase in the rate of fatalities attributable to jihadists worldwide. The reasons for the spread of suicide bombing attacks in other jihadist theaters are complex, but the success of these tactics in Iraq, the lionization that Iraqi martyrs receive on jihadist websites, and the increase in

feelings of anger and frustration caused by images of the Iraq War have all likely contributed significantly. The spread of suicide bombings should be of great concern to the United States in defending its interests and citizens around the world, because they are virtually impossible to defend against.

The Iraq War has also encouraged the spread of more hardline forms of jihad (the corollary to an increase in suicide bombing). Anger and frustration over Iraq has increased the popularity, especially among young militants, of a hardcore *takfiri* ideology that is deeply intolerant of divergent interpretations of Islam and highly tolerant of extreme forms of violence. The visceral anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Shiism widely circulated among the Internet circles around ideologues such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada (both Jordanian-Palestinian mentors to Abu Musab al Zarqawi) and Al Qaeda's Syrian hawk, Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, are even more extreme, unlikely as it may sound, than the statements of bin Laden himself.

Our study shows just how counterproductive the Iraq War has been to the war on terrorism. The most recent State Department report on global terrorism states that the goal of the United States is to identify, target, and prevent the spread of "jihadist groups focused on attacking the United States or its allies [and those groups that] view governments and leaders in the Muslim world as their primary targets." Yet, since the invasion of Iraq, attacks by such groups have risen more than sevenfold around the world. And though few Americans have been killed by jihadist terrorists in the past three years, it is wishful thinking to believe that this will continue to be the case, given the continued determination of militant jihadists to target the country they see as their main enemy. We will be living with the consequences of the Iraq debacle for more than a decade.

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The Data: The Iraq War and Jihadist Terrorism

Period 1: September 12, 2001, to March 20, 2003 (invasion of Iraq): 18.25 months

Period 2: March 21, 2003, to September 30, 2006: 41.33 months

Category	Attacks	Attacks/Year (% Change)	Fatalities	Fatalities/Year (% Change)
Worldwide Before Invasion	43	28.3	762	501
Worldwide After Invasion	688	199.8 +607%	5,824	1,691 +237%
Not Iraq Before Invasion	42	27.6	755	496
Not Iraq After Invasion	347	100.8 +265%	2,709	787 +58%
Not Iraq/Afghanistan Before Invasion	42	27.6	755	496
Not Iraq/Afghanistan After Invasion	128	37 +35%	1,907	554 +12%
Anti-U.S./Allies Before Invasion	11	7.2	291	191
Anti-U.S./Allies After Invasion	31	9.0 +24%	683	198 +4%

Region	Attacks Before Invasion	Fatalities Before Invasion	Attacks After Invasion	Fatalities After Invasion
Iraq	1	7	341	3,122
Afghanistan	0	0	219	802
Russia/Chechnya	2	234	9	497
India/Pakistan/Kashmir	19	182	52	489
Europe/NATO	0	0	6	297
Middle East (not Iraq)	3	18	37	360
Southeast Asia	16	306	12	213

Region	Attacks/Year Before Invasion	Attacks/Year After Invasion	% Change	Fatalities/Year Before Invasion	Fatalities/Year After Invasion	% Change
Iraq	-	99	-	-	906	-
Afghanistan	-	63.6	-	-	233	-
Russia/Chechnya	1.3	2.6	+99%	154	144	-6%
India/Pakistan/Kashmir	12.5	15.1	+21%	120	142	+19%
Europe/NATO	-	1.7	-	-	86	-
Middle East (not Iraq)	2	10.7	+445%	11.8	105	+783%
Southeast Asia	10.5	3.5	-67%	201	62	-69%

Increase in Suicide Bombing Attacks

- The Iraq front is where suicide bombing is employed most frequently.
- There have been 148 suicide bombing attacks in Iraq (43 percent of total Iraq attacks) post-March 2003.
- For the rest of the world there have been 47 suicide bombing attacks since the Iraq War began (13.5 percent of total attacks) whilst there were 6 in the period before. This corresponds to a 246 percent rise in the rate of suicide bombing attacks by jihadist groups. And the rate of those killed by suicide attacks rose by 24 percent.
- If Afghanistan is also excluded, there is a 150 percent rise in the rate of suicide attacks and a 14 percent increase in those killed in such attacks.