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The great British biologist J.B.S Haldane counted monotheism's creation of fanaticism as one of the most important inventions of the last 5,000 years. Call it love of God or love of group, it matters little in the end. Modern civilizations spin the potter's wheel of monotheism to manufacture the greatest cause of all, humanity. Before missionary monotheism, people did not consider that all others could be pigeonholed into one kind. The salvation of humanity is a cause as stimulating as it is impossible to achieve. Nevertheless, all modern missionary-isms, whether religious or in their secular post-Enlightenment guise, preach devotion unto death for the sake of humanity, including allowance for mass killing for the mass good. "The imagination and the spiritual strength of Shakespeare's evildoers stopped short at a dozen corpses. Because they had no ideology," wrote Alexander Solzhenitsyn in The Gulag Archipelago.

Especially for young men, mortal combat in a great cause provides the ultimate adventure and glory to gain maximum esteem in the eyes of many and, most dearly, in the hearts of their peers. By identifying their devotion with the greater defense and salvation of humanity, they commit themselves to a path that allows massive killing for what they think is a massive good. Jihadism is a transnational social and political movement in the same vein. The most heroic cause for disaffected souls in the world today is jihad, where anyone from anywhere can hope to make a mark against the most powerful country and army in the history of the world. How glorious to cut off Goliath's head with a paper cutter -- or at least cause him a big headache with a blast.

Yet, although many millions of people express sympathy with Qaeda's viral social movement or other forms of violent political expression that abuse religion and support terrorism, relatively few

willingly use violence. From a 2001-2007 survey of thirty-five predominantly Muslim nations (with 50,000 interviews randomly chosen to represent about 90 percent of the Muslim world), a Gallup study projected that 7 percent of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims thought that the 9/11 attacks were "completely justified." That's about 100 million people; however, of these many millions who express support for violence against the out-group, there are only thousands willing to actually commit violence.

This is also true in the Muslim diaspora, which provides the overwhelming majority of Qaeda followers. In the European Union, fewer than 3,000 suspects have been imprisoned for jihadi activities out of a Muslim population of perhaps 20 million. In the United States, fewer than 500 suspects have been arrested for having anything remotely to do with support for holy war against America after 9/11, with less than one hundred cases being considered serious out of an immigrant Muslim population of more than 2 million.

If so many millions support jihad, why are only relatively few willing to kill and die for it? Although heroic action for a great cause is the ultimate end, the path to violent extremism is mostly a matter of individual motivations and small group dynamics in a specific historical context. Those who go on to violence generally do so by way of family and friends within specific 'scenes': neighborhoods, schools (classes, dorms), workplaces, common leisure activities (soccer, barbershop, café), and, increasingly, online chat rooms.

The process of self selection into violence within these scenes is stimulated by a massive, media-driven political awakening in which jihad is represented as the only the way to permanently resolve glaring problems of global injustice. When this perceived injustice resonates with frustrated personal aspirations, then a way out is given universal meaning through moral outrage that supports violent action. Al Qaeda and associates do not so much recruit as attract and enlist those disaffected souls who have already decided to embark on the path to violent extremism with the help of a few fellow travelers.

More than half a century ago, Eric Hoffer noted in *The True Believer* that the higher one aims, and harder one falls (or runs up against social, economic or political barriers that prevent further advancement), the greater the likelihood of joining a violent mass movement. Faisal Shahzad, the would-be Times Square bomber, fits the mold in a modern way.

Research shows that terrorists generally don't commit terrorism because they are extraordinarily vengeful or uncaring, poor or uneducated, schooled as children in radical religion or brainwashed, criminally-minded or suicidal, or sex-starved for virgins in heaven. Most have no personal history of violent emotions and are generally peaceful in their daily lives.

Son of a former Pakistani Air Force General, Shahzad reached out for higher education in the United States and became a naturalized citizen. Until then, life had been easy for the MBA who wore designer sunglasses. But by summer 2009 he had lost his Connecticut home to the bank, left his job, and seemed estranged from his wife. He found solace in a militant religious rebirth, went to Pakistan to 'find himself' again, and found jihad.

Before and just after 9/11, jihadis, including suicide bombers, were on average materially better-off and better-educated relative to their populations of origin. Many had college educations or advanced technical training. A background in science, particularly engineering and medicine, was positively associated with likelihood to join jihad.

Now, the main threat to the West from any organization, or from well-trained cadres of volunteers, but from a Qaeda-inspired viral social movement that abuses religion in the name of defending Muslims, and which is particularly contagious among young adults who are in transition stages in their lives: immigrants, students, those still in search of friends, mates or jobs. They go looking for Al

Qaeda or its associates and, if they are lucky, find a friend or relative to take them to a makeshift training facility where they are usually told to forget about fighting Americans in Afghanistan and to "go home and do something." This was as true for the London Underground bombers and Crevice plotters and for those who recently conspired to blast the New York City subway.

Overall, foreign-born Muslims in the United States have about the same education and economic levels as the general population, whereas foreign-born Muslims are five to seven times more likely to be poor than non-Muslims in Britain, France, and Germany and nearly ten times more likely to be poor in Spain. Moreover, whereas Muslim immigrants in the US overwhelmingly buy into the American Dream, even middle class European Muslim youth often feel socially marginalized and thus more liable to seek universal meaning for frustrated personal aspirations in a violent mass movement. (On both continents, though, traditional religious education is a negative predictor of involvement in jihadi activities). It still may be too early to read any trend in the recent uptick of homegrown plots in the United States. But it is fair to ask why the jihadi call to violence is now reaching even the margins of Muslim America, particularly among some of Pakistani origin.

Between the people of America and Pakistan, there is widening distrust and resentment, despite the mask of friendship donned by both governments' leaders. In Pakistan, America is now perceived as a greater evil than India, as popular fervor against America has risen in direct proportion to US aid and involvement, egged on in Pakistan's media by an elite pained by the country's ever deepening client status. Highly militarized (Pakistan spent nearly 240 times more on defense and security than on health, education and welfare even before 9/11), politically edging toward a failed state, that nation has precious little to offer is youthful population. Add to this the fact that America has bombed Al-Qaeda's remnants into togetherness with Pakistan's historically most bellicose and indomitable tribal factions, and no wonder it takes less and less for the jihadism to ignite any part of this inflammable mix.

And so it did ignite Shahzad, who told his father that he wanted to fight the Evil Empire in Afghanistan (his father was against it), then sought out more militant friends, one of whom apparently introduced him to Qari Hussain Mehsud, the Pakistani Taliban's top trainer. After a primer in bomb making in Waziristan, Shahzad was probably told to return to America, to avenge America's assault "against Islam" (as he put it) and upon his own ambitious aspirations (as indicated in his job applications).

Shahzad was also apparently inspired by the online rhetoric of Anwar al-Awlaki, a former preacher at a Northern Virginia mosque who gained international notoriety for blessing the suicide mission of the failed Christmas airplane bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallib, and for Facebook communications with Major Nadal Hasan, an American-born Muslim psychiatrist who killed thirteen fellow soldiers at Fort Hood in November 2009. Although many are ready to leap to the conclusion that Awlaki helped to "brainwash" and "indoctrinate" these jihadi wannabes, it is much more likely that they sought out the popular Internet preacher because they already self-radicalized to the point of wanting reassurance and further guidance. "The movement is from the bottom up," notes forensic psychiatrist and former CIA case officer Marc Sageman, "just like you saw Major Hasan send twenty-one e-mails to al-Awlaki, who sends him back two, you have people seeking these guys and asking them for advice."

As I noted in my last column ("My Senate Armed Services Testimony"), the popular notion of a "clash of civilizations" is woefully misleading. Violent extremism represents a crash of traditional territorial cultures, not their resurgence, as people unmoored from millennial traditions flail about in search of a social identity. Individuals now mostly radicalize horizontally with their peers, rather than vertically through institutional leaders or organizational hierarchies: in small groups of friends -- from the same neighborhood or social network -- or even as loners who find common cause with a virtual internet community. Ways must be found beyond our own bombs and bullets to channel this disaffection, through the same culturally-savvy sorts of peer-to peer appeals and interactions that sustain the jihad. Enthralled by the economic opportunities of globalization, we are failing in Pakistan,

that most unstable of nuclear nations, as in our own backyard, to help manage the global crisis of cultures that is shattering social and political peace, and grabbing marginalized youth away from us and into the waiting arms of violent extremism.

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