

The Evolution of International Terrorism and Contemporary Globalization

Theory

By: Ryan Hurst

Capstone Advisor: John Picarelli

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History suggests that war is a natural component of human civilization. There have been but few moments in history that have not been marked by the scourge of war. Having recognized this Sun Tzu wrote: “The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected.”¹ The art of war, as a consequence of its historical universality, is an essential and fundamental component of the State and International Relations. Although war might prove a constant in human history, its forms have changed as technology has advanced and historical contexts have evolved.

Sun Tzu is probably most famous for having urged commanders to “know their enemy.”

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”²

Knowing ones enemy, as Sun Tzu advises, is only one part of the battle. To secure victory a commander, according to Sun Tzu, must know much more. “If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt; if you know Heaven and know Earth, you may make your victory complete.”³ A complete victory then will come through the knowledge of the enemy, one’s self, heaven, and earth. Sun Tzu defines

¹ Tzu, Sun, *The Art of War* (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2003), 1-2.

² Ibid. 17.

³ Ibid. 46.

heaven as “night and day, cold and heat, times and seasons.”⁴ In a modern context, this has not changed drastically. Technologically advanced militaries have been able to turn night into day and have been able to control, to some degree, their level of comfort in extreme seasons, but the knowledge of “heaven” or the weather and seasons has not changed much in terms of battlefield tactics since the time of Sun Tzu. The notion of Earth, which Sun Tzu defines as “distances, great and small; danger and security; open ground and narrow passes; the chance of life and death,”⁵ has changed. Technology has made great distances small, made more ground open, created more narrow passes, and has changed the way we experience both danger and security. One of the more important elements of Earth as described by Sun Tzu is the battlefield terrain which has always been diverse and which technology has rendered more diverse. Sun Tzu accounts for this when he describes the variations in terrain that affect the tactics employed by commanders. He argues that an army cannot exploit natural advantages without “local” knowledge of the terrain.

“We cannot enter into alliance with neighboring princes until we are acquainted with their designs. We are not fit to lead an army on the march unless we are familiar with the face of the country – its mountains and forests, its pitfalls and precipices, its marshes and swamps. We shall be unable to turn natural advantages to account unless we make use of local guides.”⁶

In a contemporary context, the terrain is no longer just geographic- it is technological as well. The technological terrain consists of smart bombs, wireless communication, and aerospace technology that have rendered the geographic high ground, in many ways, irrelevant. Modern military powers have secured “local” knowledge of the new technological terrain and through invention have developed their own technological

⁴ Ibid. 7.

⁵ Ibid. 7.

⁶ Ibid. 52.

landscape. Although the nature of modern warfare has changed the “terrain,” many of the fundamentals described by Sun Tzu remain the same. For example, after describing the types of action that should be taken on various types of terrain by military leadership Sun Tzu provides important counsel to military leadership: “Rapidity is the essence of war; take advantage of the enemy’s unreadiness, make your way by unexpected routes, and attack unguarded spots,”⁷ and “If the enemy leaves a door open, you must rush in.”⁸ Thus, to secure victory, a commander should not only be familiar with the terrain but should be capable of exploiting all the new open doors that come with technological advancement.

At the end of the Cold War, a new era of integration and prosperity began to materialize. With the fall of the wall came a new uni-polar era wherein the United States would act as the global hegemon. The 1990’s would see incredible economic growth, international collaboration, miraculous technological innovation, and with few exceptions peace. Some argued that this new era was the “end of history,”⁹ and that liberal democracy represented the last step in the evolution of government. This theory represents the broad sense of optimism that many in the West felt about the nature of international politics that would follow the lengthy and tiresome Cold War. Unfortunately, “end of history complacency”¹⁰ and rapid globalization opened doors for new non-state actors.

September 11, 2001 shattered this new peace and optimism and unmasked the face of a fierce new global threat. Extreme ideologues with limited funds acting outside

⁷ Ibid. 49.

⁸ Ibid. 53.

⁹ Francis Fukuyama made this argument in his 1992 book entitled “The End of History and the Last Man.”

¹⁰ Will, George, “Lessons of 9/11 – and 12/7,” *Washington Post*, September 9, 2002, Accessed Online. <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/cols/will090902.asp>.

the state were capable of launching an attack that changed the course of history. Having targeted and even having destroyed some important American emblems of this new global peace- the rogue international terrorist organization from remote places in Afghanistan named Al-Qaeda and one of its leaders Osama Bin Laden would become household names. Some might find it ironic that a band of ideological misfits armed with ideas and box cutters would succeed fifty years of Cold War that involved the two greatest military powers in history, the greatest and most potentially devastating arms race in history, and billions and billions of dollars as the new global threat. Many factors have influenced the development of this phenomenon- yet in simple terms, “doors” opened and a new enemy “rushed in.”

Paul Romer, a Stanford economist, famously wrote, “A crisis is a terrible thing to waste.”¹¹ Likewise, a tragedy is a terrible thing to waste. The tragedy of September 11th will be a waste if we collectively do not attempt to understand those forces that acted to produce such horrible events. Some have rushed to place blame or exact revenge, but the wise man will not “become a monster in order to defeat a monster.”¹² The purpose of this paper is to describe what forces acted to enable the planning, recruitment, training, financing, and execution of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and what social, cultural, and political forces acted to motivate such extremism. As directed by Sun Tzu many have written extensively on the nature of the enemy, and in many ways we “know” our enemy. The purpose of this paper is to describe the new notions of “Heaven” and “Earth,” or in other words, the external factors that affect the tactics used in battle in an attempt to answer how current global trends, developments, and theories help us understand the

¹¹ Friedman, Thomas, *The World is Flat* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 359.

¹² Bono, “Miss Sarajevo,” *U218 Singles*, Purchased on iTunes.

nature of terrorism in an increasingly sophisticated globalizing world. A major reason for this examination is to contextualize international terrorist organizations and the extent to which they do not simply exist, but thrive in a technologically sophisticated society.

When leaders understand the context and framework within which international terrorist organizations operate their ability to cut the enemy off at the narrow digital passes will improve.

In this paper I will show that we already have an extensive knowledge and understanding of the global forces that have acted to provoke and promote this new global threat. Contemporary globalization theory serves as a focused lens through which policy makers and scholars can examine this new global phenomenon. International terrorist organizations operate within the same international system that governments, international organizations, and multinational corporations operate in and are subject to the same historical, technological, and political contexts. Two important theorists whose works have illuminated these contemporary global forces are Thomas Friedman and Samuel Huntington whose major arguments will be summarized in the few following paragraphs. Following the overview of Huntington and Friedman's core arguments, I will show how organizations like al-Qaeda have evolved within and according to the mainstream globalization paradigm. Although in many ways isolated geographically, international terrorist organizations do not exist in a vacuum and operate within the same global framework as everyone else.

The World is Flat

Although Columbus proved that the geographic world was indeed round, Thomas Friedman argues that the digital world is becoming increasingly flat. Friedman describes it thus:

“The world is flat.’... The global competitive playing field [is] being leveled. The world [is] being flattened. It is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world – using computers, e-mail, fiber-optic networks, teleconferencing, and dynamic new software... When you start to think of the world as flat, or at least in the process of flattening, a lot of things make sense in ways they did not before... what the flattening of the world means is that we are now connecting all the knowledge centers on the planet together into a single global network, which – if politics and terrorism do not get in the way – could usher in an amazing era of prosperity, innovation, and collaboration, by companies, communities and individuals. But contemplating the flat world also left me filled with dread, professional and personal. My personal dread derived from the obvious fact that it’s not only the software writers and computer geeks who get empowered to collaborate on work in the flat world. It’s also al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks.¹³

It was after a journalistic trip to India that Friedman made this observation. He observed how deeply interdependent countries separated by oceans and thousands of miles could be. He observed the high level of skill manifest by the workforces of some areas in the developing world. Friedman ultimately concluded that because of how quick, widespread, and relatively inexpensive communication had become that the global playing field was becoming level. Although the title suggests otherwise, Friedman concedes that there are a number of forces that have limited the flatness of the world. In other words, the world is not completely flat yet, but technological advancement has made the world flatter and has contributed to the continued flattening or leveling of the global playing field. Clearly, the implications of a flat world are enormous and diverse. Companies can now draw upon the expertise of multiethnic and multinational labor, products, ideas, and skills at, in some cases, a lower price. This has made the global labor market much more competitive. It is no longer sufficient to simply “be in the right

¹³ Friedman, 8.

place” one must also possess the right skills at the right price. Containerization and computerization have made capital, not just human capital, much more mobile - the effects of these developments are obvious in many industrial nations - factories have been shut down, entire industries have become obsolete. This however is not at the crux of Friedman’s notion of a flat world – the flat world is not only level for labor-intensive low value-added goods. As Friedman points out, the flat world is one where a doctor in India reads the x-ray images from an American hospital during the night shift or where the Harvard daily newspaper is digitized in Cambodia.

Despite how rapidly the pace of global technological change is, the flattening of the world did not happen overnight. Friedman describes ten major forces that have contributed to the flattening of the world. For the purposes of this study I will only focus on four of the ten flatteners.

The first of the four flatteners pertinent to this study is uploading. Uploading is the transfer of digital information from the user to another source. The uploading of information is a critical component of web-based communities like MySpace and Facebook and to other content-based websites like Wikipedia. The act of uploading content to a personal website, blog, discussion board, or other type of Internet site has a variety of effects. Uploading information can be empowering. By uploading information the individual is capable of potentially reaching millions of individuals all over the globe – uploading information to the Internet is the ultimate megaphone. Friedman describes uploading thus: “Uploading, by individuals or communities, is already a huge flattener. It is spreading because the flat-world platform that makes it possible is spreading and because uploading responds to a very deep human longing for individuals to participate

and make their voices heard.”¹⁴ On the other hand unlike the megaphone, when users upload content it is often completely anonymous. Individuals are thus capable of trying on new identities expressing feelings and ideas that they would not normally express. Furthermore, those who upload information are rarely subject to the burden of truth or fact. Anybody anywhere can upload information whether it is true or not, or based in any sort of fact or not. “People like to upload, and that is why of all the ten forces flattening the world, uploading has the potential to be the most disruptive. Just how many people will exercise that ability to be in the game, and how soon, is what will determine just how disruptive uploading becomes.”¹⁵

Uploading information has drastically altered the digital terrain and will be an open door for the enemy. For example, international terrorist organizations have uploaded their own “terrorist encyclopedias,” bomb making instructions, and other information that serve as resources for terror recruiters, organizers, financiers, planners, and executors. In the context of international terrorist organizations, the global phenomenon of user-uploaded content has altered how rogue groups such as al-Qaeda communicate and operate. Anonymity and millions of users have permitted terrorists to blend in and become the proverbial needle hidden, not in a haystack, but a stack of needles.

The second of Friedman’s ten flatteners that applies to the overall framework for the analysis of international terrorist organization in the context of globalization is offshoring. “Outsourcing means taking some specific, but limited, function that your company was doing in-house... and having another company perform that exact same

¹⁴ Ibid. 124.

¹⁵ Ibid. 125.

function for you... Offshoring, by contrast, is when a company moves the whole factory offshore.”¹⁶ Offshoring results in both industrialization and deindustrialization. This is significant because both of these phenomena have significant social consequences. Those living in an industrializing country will undergo significant lifestyle changes as they attempt to move up the income ladder. Some will blame the cultural changes that they are experiencing on those whose products they are manufacturing. Ultimately blaming the more developed for imposing their culture and values on them. Simultaneously, many of those going through the process of deindustrialization will also experience drastic lifestyle changes and will in many cases lose their source of income. This, in turn, will provoke a resentment of those workers who have “unfairly stolen” their jobs. Both the industrialized and the de-industrialized will blame the cultural other for their circumstances. This is significant in an examination of those forces that have influenced the rise of international terrorist organizations because many counter-hegemonic forces that fight against globalization have been mobilized by mutual disregard for the economic “imperialism” or neo-colonialism that has so drastically affected their way of life. Ironically the same global force that motivates the counter-hegemonic forces renders many in de-industrializing economies less tolerant of the counter-hegemonic narratives. Despite the various strong counter-hegemonic movements that embolden some individuals to act out in opposition to those institutions that represent the new global economy (like the World Trade Center or the World Bank), the likelihood of any reversal or step away from integration is unlikely and potentially cataclysmic. In a specific reference to Sino-American economic integration, Friedman makes the following statement, which applies in relative terms to a myriad of other countries and to the global

¹⁶ Ibid. 137.

economic system in general, “Its economy is totally interlinked with those of the developed world, and trying to delink it would cause economic and geopolitical chaos that could devastate the global economy.”¹⁷

The third flattening force relevant to this study Friedman refers to as “in-forming.” Friedman defines in-forming in the following manner:

“Informing is the individual’s personal analog to uploading, out-sourcing, insourcing, supply-chaining, and offshoring. In-forming is the ability to build and deploy your own personal supply chain – a supply chain of information, knowledge, and entertainment. In-forming is about self-collaboration – becoming your own self-directed and self-empowered researcher, editor, and selector of entertainment, without having to go to the library or the movie theater or through network television. In-forming is searching for knowledge. It is about seeking like-minded people and communities.”¹⁸

The Internet has made the procurement of vast sums of information in various formats and languages possible for even the most technologically illiterate person. Search engines like Google have increased the accuracy and relevancy of Internet searches and have made the vast sums of information on the Internet much more accessible. The more information is digitized and uploaded to the Internet the more information is ultimately available to those who do not intend on using it wisely or positively. “In a flat world, you can’t run, you can’t hide, and smaller and smaller rocks are turned over.”¹⁹ Friedman made this statement in the context of personal information and history but this statement has broad application with regard to any type of potentially harmful information. Government documents, architectural designs, bomb making directions and other types of potentially useful information to terrorist organizations all fit within the framework of Friedman’s warning about the risks of in-forming. As mentioned earlier, terrorist

¹⁷ Ibid. 150.

¹⁸ Ibid. 179.

¹⁹ Ibid. 185.

organizations have already uploaded dangerous information having the foreknowledge that this information is available to those who search diligently enough.

The fourth flattener relevant to this paper and final flattening force of Friedman's ten is arguably the most important. He refers to the last flattening force as "steroids," and this is not in reference to the current trend towards the globalization of sport - especially Baseball. The steroids that Friedman refers to are as follows: 1) Computational Capability, Storage Capability, and Input/Output Capability; 2) Instant Messaging and File Sharing; 3) Internet Telephone; 4) Videoconferencing; 5) Graphics; and 6) Wireless Technology. Friedman writes the following about these phenomena that he calls steroids:

"...it is hard to exaggerate how much this tenth flattener – the steroids – is going to amplify and further empower all the other forms of collaboration. These steroids should make uploading that much more open, because they will enable more individuals to collaborate with one another in more ways and from more places than ever before. They will enhance outsourcing...supply-chaining...insourcing... and informing."²⁰

These six phenomena have had a clear impact on society and commerce. The Apple iPhone is one example of how far we are pushing the technological envelope. This one-device makes it possible to access the Internet anywhere there is a cellular phone signal, upload and download information, communicate, compute, and otherwise manage nearly every aspect of one's digital life. So many of today's youth spend a significant amount of time on social-networking websites and Apple has promoted the iPhone as a way to never be out-of-touch with what is happening on Facebook, or other social-networking websites. Best of all, the device is portable and has made it possible to be "plugged-in" to the rest of the world without being next to the electrical socket, phone line, or cable box. In many ways, we have only just scratched the surface of the technological capabilities that we already have. Many companies are just beginning to understand the

²⁰ Ibid. 198-199.

virtues of an open platform, and companies like Google and Apple have made it possible for users to contribute to the development of new programs, uses, and applications for their products. Apple has gone so far as to even sell, at the price specified by applications creator, or give away for free the open-source applications created by their users. Friedman notes: “As a result of these steroids, engines can now talk to computers, people can talk to people, computers can talk to computers, and people can talk to computers farther, faster, more cheaply, and more easily than ever before.”²¹

Friedman’s ten flatteners, especially the four mentioned here, had to evolve and become integrated into the global system in order to take effect. Many of the ten flatteners have existed for a considerable number of years even though some might have only become widely available and relevant in recent years. Friedman argues that all of these forces needed to converge in such a way that they all become relevant and mutually reinforced. Even the most advanced and technologically sophisticated organizations integrated these flatteners over time. This is true especially for international terrorist organizations. Many of the most important leaders of these organizations live in some of the most remote, isolated, and underdeveloped areas on the face of the globe. In many ways, they are the last to have access to these new technologies. Consequently, it is safe to assume that international terrorist organizations have integrated these new technologies into their organization well after other global organizations have done so. Friedman asserts that there was a *triple convergence* that has advanced the penetration of the flatteners into the real world. The first convergence Friedman identifies as the convergence that “created a whole new platform.”²² In essence, the convergence of

²¹ Ibid. 200.

²² Ibid. 205.

Friedman's flattening forces would create a platform that would enable all sorts of collaborations.

"This platform enables individuals, groups, companies, and universities anywhere in the world to collaborate – for the purposes of innovation, production, education, research, entertainment, and, alas, war-making – like no creative platform ever before. This platform now operates without regard to geography, distance, time, and, in the near future, language. Going forward, this platform is going to be at the center of everything."²³

One might argue that, in many ways, the platform that Friedman describes is already at the center of everything. The first convergence is a very obvious but important step towards the integration of the flattening forces into the global system. Without this first convergence it would have been difficult for the flatteners to have had the impact that they currently have.

The second convergence Friedman calls "horizontalization." This is essentially the convergence of the platform and the "ways" that people collaborate and organize to accomplish tasks and communicate. This is the way that the flatteners are integrated into the broader system in such a way that makes the flattening forces "standard."

"Many of the flatteners have been around for years. But for the full flattening effects to be felt, we needed not only the ten flatteners to converge but also something else. We needed the emergence of a large cadre of managers, innovators, business consultants, business schools, designers, IT specialists, CEOs, and workers to get comfortable with, and develop, the sorts of horizontal collaboration and value-creation processes and habits that could take advantage of this new, flatter playing field. In short the convergence of the ten flatteners begat the convergence of a set of business practices and skills that would get the most out of the flat world. And then the two began to mutually reinforce each other."²⁴

The horizontal aspect of the second convergence has to do with the way individuals collaborate. Instead of collaborating in a top-down manner, organizations can now collaborate horizontally across departments and industries.

²³ Ibid. 205.

²⁴ Ibid. 208.

The convergence of the platform and horizontalization with new, previously disenfranchised individuals from all over the globe is what Friedman calls the third convergence. Friedman believes that of the triple convergence the third convergence is the most important. The third convergence is what makes globalization truly global.

“It is this triple convergence – of new players, on a new playing field, developing new processes and habits for horizontal collaboration – that I believe is the most important force shaping global economics and politics in the early twenty-first century. Giving so many people access to all these tools of collaboration, along with the ability through search engines and the Web to access billions of pages of raw information, ensures that the next generation of innovations will come from all over Planet Flat. The scale of the global community that is soon going to be able to participate in all sorts of discovery and innovation is something the world has simply never seen before.”²⁵

The significance of the triple convergence is that now more than ever individuals are capable of having global reach. One’s impact can be as far reaching as fiber optic cable, satellites, and telephone lines will permit. Without these the convergence of these flatteners it is unlikely that an extreme ideologue like Osama bin Laden living in the mountainous regions of Afghanistan would have had the ability to reach so many millions of people with his message and it is unlikely that he would have been able to plan and orchestrate such a tremendously horrific event. Although the third convergence has allowed billions more otherwise isolated individuals access to the global marketplace, it has also allowed those extremists, who would have otherwise been insignificant, access to technology that transmits their message throughout the world.

All of these flattening forces do not exist in a vacuum; the flattening process has important social consequences. These changes will affect how “individuals, communities, and companies organize themselves, where companies and communities stop and start, how individuals balance their different identities as consumers, employees, shareholders, and citizens, how people define themselves politically, and what role

²⁵ Ibid. 212.

government plays in managing all of this flux.”²⁶ This identity crisis will, as Friedman describes, lead to increased social friction. Samuel Huntington, whose work will be a crucial element of this study, analyzes specifically the friction that is occurring as a result of globalization at the “civilizational fault lines.” Increases in global collaboration will ultimately lead to increased social interaction and will lead many to re-examine their identity and sense of self. For many individuals increases in cross cultural contact will yield positive and enriching experiences, while for others increases in cross cultural contact will put into question their cultural identity and will provoke a negative and conflicted response. Furthermore, the flat world will necessitate the creation of multiple identities. Individuals will need to develop those attributes that facilitate multi-cultural interaction while maintaining their own personal identity and local cultural attributes. At this point it is sufficient to recognize that these flattening forces have important social significance and will enable both those who have the skills to enrich the flat world and those who wish to create friction in it. Friction is the natural consequence of any major social change, but it is not sufficient to dismiss this friction as simply a natural consequence and as a result insignificant. Is a flat world worth the loss of cultures that are “in the way” of flat world progress? How hard should the flat world push against the various types of friction that slow advancement? These are questions that require honest sensible answers.

This sort of honest introspection, that the flat world desperately lacks, is what Friedman calls the “Alcoholics Anonymous”²⁷ model of development. Adapting to the new flat world is no easy task; there is a certain amount of risk involved in making some

²⁶ Ibid. 234.

²⁷ Ibid. 397.

of the drastic organizational changes necessary to thriving in the flat world. Friedman describes the AA approach to development in the context of underdeveloped economies who are in denial as to the state of their economic performance. He argues that honest introspection will help underperforming organizations and states identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to become more competitive in a flat world. I would add however that honest introspection is crucial for more-developed economies and organizations as well, and that introspection is not only required on economic and technological matters, but cultural matters also. Developing and developed economies should search their respective “souls” to determine not only how flat they hope to become, but what social, economic, and cultural institutions they want to flatten. Likewise, flat world companies and countries must introspectively examine the morality of their flattening forces before simply steamrolling into “unflattened” areas. September 11th was a day that the developed world introspectively examined those flat world forces that both caused and facilitated such horrific events. Despite the introspective attitude of many in the developed world, leaders encouraged their citizens to go shopping. Answers to the important questions provoked by a flattening world will not appear without honest introspection by those who are flattening and those who are being flattened. One cannot stand in the middle of the train tracks with closed eyes and expect not to be hit by a train.

Having to cope with the triple convergence of flat world forces has engendered a variety of organizational responses that have allowed businesses and other organizations to thrive in the new flat world. Friedman outlines six rules that have helped these organizations cope with the new flat world platform. Ironically these rules do not only apply to global business but global terrorist organizations as well. Here I will describe

four of the most important rules for coping in a flat world that are the most relevant for terrorist organizations. “Rule #1: When the world goes flat – and you are feeling flattened – reach for a shovel and dig inside yourself. Don’t try to build walls.”²⁸ Although this might seem like a strange rule for organizations like al-Qaeda, current events suggest that even terrorist organizations have reached within themselves in order to integrate the flat world platforms. In many ways this is the ultimate double-standard; after all, “western imperialism,” “neo-colonialism,” and many aspects of globalization are what organizations like al-Qaeda fight against. This resistance to globalization stems from “a religious clergy that literally bans ijtiḥād, reinterpretation of the principles of Islam in light of current circumstances.”²⁹ Even more ironically, individuals like Osama bin Laden forbid their children from studying anything other than the Koran³⁰ and refuse to take advantage of the conveniences of modern life – even though as an organization they have promoted the study of computers. Despite fighting so viscerously against the flat world, international terrorist organizations “dig inside” themselves and incorporate the flat world platform so that they can fight against the flat world more efficiently. Clearly, al-Qaeda is not fighting against the Internet. There are a number of forces that motivate the actions of organizations like al-Qaeda, many which will be discussed later in this paper. However, it is interesting to note that even the most viscous opponents to the flat world have embraced and integrated many elements of the flat world platform into the day-to-day operations of their organizations.

²⁸ Ibid. 426.

²⁹ Ibid. 412.

³⁰ Bergen, Peter L., *The Osama bin Laden I know: An Oral History of al Qaeda’s Leader*, (New York: Free Press, 2006), 384.

The second of Friedman's rules is similar to the first for organizations like al-Qaeda. "Rule #2: And the small shall act big... One way small [organizations] flourish in the flat world is by learning to act really big. And the key to being small and acting big is being quick to take advantage of all the new tools for collaboration to reach farther, faster, wider, and deeper."³¹ International terrorist organizations, which possess relatively meager resources, are small in terms of "market cap" and must, in order to "flourish," take advantage of all the new tools that expand their reach. Despite their size, international terrorist organizations have had the ability to develop a technological infrastructure that has greatly expanded their reach beyond their isolated geographic areas. In essence, the flat world has allowed the "small to act big."

The third of Friedman's rules is the opposite of rule two but the third rule still applies to international terrorist organizations. "Rule #3: And the big shall act small... One way that big [organizations] learn to flourish in the flat world is by learning how to act really small by enabling their customers to act really big."³² Al-Qaeda has adopted the flat world platform in a myriad of ways and, despite relatively meager resources, remains a global organization. Ideologically al-Qaeda is a vertical institution where a few principle leaders impose ideological on the organization. Organizationally however, al-Qaeda has empowered individuals to work within the ideological framework that they have instituted. Members of al-Qaeda can access a variety of training manuals and other organizational materials on the web, and can attend al-Qaeda training camps where they are trained in al-Qaeda terror methodology. Al-Qaeda has also flattened itself to the extent that independent "terror cells" collaborate, at times, independent of the principle

³¹ Friedman, 431.

³² Ibid. 436.

organization. Friedman's third rule is directed towards large companies but the principle applies to international terrorist organizations as well. "The way that big companies act small is... by making their business, as much as possible, into a buffet. These companies create a platform that allows individual customers to serve themselves in their own way, at their own pace, in their own time, according to their own tastes."³³ Although international terrorist organizations do not sell specific products or services, they can create a framework that allows their ideological participants to involve themselves in the organization "in their own way, at their own pace, in their own time, according to their own tastes."

The fourth rule for coping with the flattening world is one of the most frightening within the context of international terrorist organizations.

"Rule #4: The best [organizations] are the best collaborators. In the flat world, more and more business will be done through collaborations within and between [organizations], for a very simple reason: The next layers of value creation... are becoming so complex that no single firm or department is going to be able to master them alone."³⁴

The ability to collaborate horizontally has empowered individuals across the globe to use their special skills to compete with those who might have access to more resources. As Friedman points out, to arrive at the next level of value creation specialized skills are necessary. Effectively, Friedman urges organizations to outsource some of their processes to other more specialized and efficient organizations. Recent scholarly work suggests that companies seeking to lower the bottom line or increase efficiency are not the only organizations that collaborate horizontally. There is substantial evidence to suggest that international terrorists are collaborating with international criminal organizations to accomplish their goals. From an organizational standpoint, this makes

³³ Ibid. 437.

³⁴ Ibid. 439.

perfect sense. The Internet has facilitated anonymous communication and has allowed social networks across the globe to become interconnected it was only a matter of time before rogue international organizations began to collaborate in the real world. A further examination of this new criminal-terror nexus will follow; at this point it is sufficient to simply identify that the notion of terrorist organizations as groups of simple individuals hiding in caves planning their next attack is false. International terrorist organizations are anything but simple and collaborate with groups that can help them achieve their desired ends.

All of the forces described by Friedman have had a clear and important effects on culture, international and domestic politics, business, war, and international terrorist organizations. Friedman readily acknowledges that all of these flattening forces can be used for both the benefit and destruction of life. Friedman states:

“ I tried to explain that you cannot understand the rise of al-Qaeda emotionally and politically without reference to the flattening of the world. What I am arguing here is that you cannot understand the rise of al-Qaeda technically without reference to the flattening of the world, either. Globalization in general has been al-Qaeda’s friend in that it has helped to solidify a revival of Muslim identity and solidarity, with Muslims in one country much better able to see and sympathize with the struggles of their brethren in another country – thanks to the Internet and satellite television... Think about it: A century ago, anarchists were limited in their ability to communicate and collaborate with one another, to find sympathizers, and to band together for an operation. Today even the Unabomber could find friends to join a consortium where his “strengths” could be magnified and reinforced by others who had just as warped a worldview as he did.”³⁵

Technological advancement has been “no respecter of persons;” the flat world platform works just as well for Microsoft as it does for al-Qaeda. Friedman’s description of the technological terrain will serve as a critical element of this examination. Friedman has described how al-Qaeda has risen to the point that it has, Huntington describes why al-Qaeda insists on rising.

The Clash of Civilizations

³⁵ Ibid. 531.

As described above, many believed that the fall of the Berlin wall marked the “end of history” and that liberal democracies would lead the world into a new era of peace. This optimistic outlook has become increasingly obsolete in view of current events. No longer are international alliances based on ideological similarities. As Samuel Huntington describes in The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order: “In this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations.”³⁶ Huntington argues that the most important distinctions among groups are cultural. This is similar to Friedman’s notion of friction. However, different from Friedman’s assertion that nation states are causing friction, Huntington argues that the flattening forces are to be blamed for the friction. “The forces of integration in the world are real and are precisely what are generating counterforces of cultural assertion and civilizational consciousness.”³⁷ In a globalizing post Cold War world many attempt to reaffirm their identities – people want to know who they are and how they fit in the new world order. “People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions.”³⁸ No longer is the world divided into a first, second, and third world based on alignment and ideology; the new world order is defined in terms of civilizations. Huntington further asserts that, “Human history is the history of civilizations. It is impossible to think of the development of humanity in any other terms.”³⁹

³⁶ Huntington, Samuel, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2003), 28.

³⁷ Ibid. 36.

³⁸ Ibid. 21.

³⁹ Ibid. 40.

Civilizations are groupings of nation states that share similar religions, languages, histories, values, customs, institutions, and identities. In other words, civilizations are defined in terms of culture. Clearly culture is not the only force working to recreate the new world order; Huntington asserts, “nation states remain the principle actors in world affairs.”⁴⁰ He goes on to add that “their behavior is shaped as in the past by the pursuit of power and wealth, but it is also shaped by cultural preferences, commonalities, and differences.”⁴¹ Huntington identifies nine different civilizations: Western, Latin American, African, Islamic, Sinic, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist, and Japanese. Huntington’s notion of civilizations is based in five criteria. “First, a distinction exists between civilization in the singular and civilizations in the plural.”⁴² The principle difference here is that civilization in the singular represents the opposite of “barbarism,” or refined “settled, urban, and literate”⁴³ societies. Civilizations in the plural are what Huntington focuses his argument on; they are the groups of nation states that share a similar culture. “Second, a civilization is a cultural entity.”⁴⁴ Huntington argues that, “civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people.”⁴⁵ The second criterion is one of the core elements of Huntington’s argument. If civilizations are not cultural entities then the rest of his argument untenable. He is careful to clarify that “civilization and race are not identical,”⁴⁶ because, in the case of civilizations, race is not a universal determinant of culture. “Third, civilizations are comprehensive, that is, none of their constituent units can be fully understood without reference to the encompassing

⁴⁰ Ibid. 21.

⁴¹ Ibid. 21.

⁴² Ibid. 40.

⁴³ Ibid. 40.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 41.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 41.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 42.

civilizations.”⁴⁷ Civilizations, according to Huntington, are the “broadest cultural [entities],”⁴⁸ and can contain a broad range of identities. Consequently, civilizations are fluid and change over time.

“Civilizations have no clear-cut boundaries and no precise beginnings and endings. People can and do redefine their identities and, as result, the composition and shapes of civilization and shapes of civilizations change over time. The cultures of peoples interact and overlap. The extent to which the cultures of civilizations resemble or differ from each other also varies considerably. Civilizations are nonetheless meaningful entities, and while the lines between them are seldom sharp, they are real.”⁴⁹

The notion of civilization as culture is abstract because it is intangible and social scientists are unable to measure it. Although culture is not quantifiable and the differences in culture cannot be measured- only described, the affects of culture are nonetheless very real. It would be naïve to suggest that culture was irrelevant or that it does not play a major role in shaping international affairs, especially with regard to international terrorist organizations, even if the phenomenon is abstract and unquantifiable. Much of the rhetoric used by international terrorist leaders is based in this notion of civilizational clash and cultural oppression/imperialism. Although Huntington’s notion of civilization is abstract, it is not irrelevant or without merit. “Fourth, civilizations are mortal but also very long-lived; they evolve, adapt, and are the most enduring of human associations.”⁵⁰ Civilizations, as cultural entities, are the slowest moving and most powerful social movements. According to Huntington, civilizations engender empires and states that will come and go with time. For example, the Islamic civilization has had a variety of important systems of governance come and go through time. The Islamic civilization has been an imperial power and subject to imperial powers.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 43.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 43.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 43.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 43.

Although the shape, ideas, and composition of civilization change over time, there is no denying that civilizations, as Huntington describes, are the most “enduring of human associations.” The fifth characteristic of a civilization is that they are not political entities. Huntington asserts, “since civilizations are cultural not political entities, they do not as such, maintain order, establish justice, collect taxes, fight wars, negotiate treaties, or do anything of the other things which governments do.”⁵¹ Because civilizations are not political entities, most civilizations will contain multiple states. The criteria explained above are critical components of Huntington’s broader argument because they bring his abstract notion of civilization into the light.

Huntington further argues that interaction between civilizations have happened in three different periods: 1) Encounters, 2) Impact, and 3) Interactions. The period of civilizational encounters occurred before 1500 AD and denotes a historical context that made intercivilizational interaction difficult. Geography, technology, distance, and language were all factors that limited intercivilizational interactions. The impact period of intercivilizational interaction was marked by the rise of the West. At this point in history, according to Huntington, “Intermittent or limited multidirectional encounters among civilizations gave way to the sustained, overpowering, unidirectional impact of the West on all other civilizations.”⁵² The rise of commerce, cities, and national consciousness among Western populations relative to their Eastern counterparts led to “...four hundred years... of the subordination of other societies to Western civilization.”⁵³ The rise of the West also led to the creation of a global political framework that would become the foundation for the next period of intercivilizational

⁵¹ Ibid. 44.

⁵² Ibid. 50.

⁵³ Ibid. 51.

interaction. The interaction period has “moved [relations among civilizations] from a phase dominated by the unidirectional impact of one civilization on all others to one of intense, sustained, and multidirectional interactions among all civilizations.”⁵⁴ This is the flat world era of civilizational interaction.

The rise of the interaction period of intercivilizational relations does not necessarily signify the development of a universal civilization. Many believe that increased interaction in a global environment dominated by Western institutions and structure will result in the homogenization of culture and the rise of a universal civilization. However, Huntington argues that there are a number of factors that prevent the rise of a universal civilization. First, there does not appear to be any major change in global language composition. Over the last fifty years the number of people speaking the universal language of English has not changed – if there has been any change, the number of global English speakers has decreased.⁵⁵ Second, despite a global rise in religious consciousness, the rise of a universal religion is unlikely. From 1900 to 2000, there was little change in global religious composition. Islam was the only one of the major world religions to increase in relative size as a percentage of the world’s population. Language and religion are critical elements of any civilization and culture. If there is no common linguistic structure or religion, it is unlikely that the world will share a common set of cultural values.

In point of fact, Huntington argues that Western power is fading. In relative terms of territory, population, economic product, and military capability Western power is declining. Huntington in no way suggests that the West is not the most dominant

⁵⁴ Ibid. 53.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 60.

civilization in the terms listed above- he argues that Western power is decreasing in relative terms. Logically the relative decline of Western power means that there has been a relative increase in the power of other civilizations. “The distribution of cultures in the world reflects the distribution of power... European colonialism is over; American hegemony is receding. The erosion of Western culture follows, as indigenous, historically rooted mores, languages, beliefs, and institutions reassert themselves.”⁵⁶ Huntington further argues that the best indicator of increased anti-Western sentiment is manifest by a widespread religious resurgence.

“...The revival of non-Western religions is the most powerful manifestation of anti-Westernism in non-Western societies. That revival is not a rejection of modernity; it is a rejection of the West and of the secular, relativistic, degenerate culture associated with the West... It is a declaration of cultural independence from the West, a proud statement that: ‘We will be modern but we won’t be you.’”⁵⁷

Religious resurgence is just one indicator that many are rejecting an identity that they believe is being imposed upon them. The relative decline of Western dominance has “opened doors” for other civilizations to rush in and reassert their identity.

Huntington specifically addresses the Islamic civilization’s strong cultural assertiveness by crediting the rise of Islamic civilizational assertion as the result of strong population growth and social mobilization. Like most revolutionary movements, Huntington argues, that Islamic reassertion consists of intellectuals, students/youth, and the urban poor. Coinciding with global Islamic reassertion has been a long period of strong population growth. “Between 1965 and 1990 the total number of people on earth rose from 3.3 billion to 5.3, an annual growth rate of 1.85 percent. In Muslim societies growth rates almost always were over 2.0 percent, often exceeded 2.5 percent, and at

⁵⁶ Ibid. 91.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 101.

times were over 3.0 percent.”⁵⁸ Sustained population growth like this would have significant social effects in any social context, but combined with slow economic growth, significant income disparity, post-colonial politics, oil, and violations of sovereignty by foreign governments only served to enhance the social consequences. Islamic assertion is not limited to revolutionaries. “The Islamic Resurgence is... a broad intellectual, cultural, social, and political movement prevalent throughout the Islamic world. The Resurgence is mainstream not extremist, pervasive not isolated.”⁵⁹ Those on the extreme fringe of the broader Islamic Resurgence are those who have violently asserted themselves into international politics. This should not discount the broader issues faced in the Islamic world – employment and resource issues are serious problems in their own right. It is when these issues open doors to ideologues that social problems become even more urgent. Huntington predicts:

“Muslim population growth will be a destabilizing force for both Muslim societies and their neighbors. The large numbers of young people with secondary education will continue to power the Islamic Resurgence and promote Muslim militancy, militarism, and migration. As a result, the early years of the twenty-first century are likely to see an ongoing resurgence of non-Western power and culture and the clash of the peoples of non-Western civilizations with the West and with each other.”⁶⁰

Western nations would be wise to tread lightly in volatile civilizations beset by serious social predicaments. Thus far, the early twenty-first century has seen a violent resurgence of Islamic civilization on the world stage that has changed the current security paradigm and geo-political framework.

Economic and population growth does not explain why civilizations clash.

Huntington continues his argument with an explanation of why “cultural commonality facilitate[s] cooperation and cohesion among people and cultural differences promote

⁵⁸ Ibid. 117.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 110.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 121.

cleavages and conflicts.”⁶¹ Civilizations are the broadest cultural entities and although, according to Huntington, individual identities vary within a civilization broader identities tend to trump the more narrow differences in identity. He compares the narrow identity differences within a civilization to the narrow differences of identity that occur in the military structure. “In a world where culture counts, the platoons are tribes and ethnic groups, the regiments are nations, and the armies are civilizations.”⁶² International terrorist organizations would then fit somewhere between tribe and nation and the forces of globalization that they so violently oppose, like multinational corporations and military institutions, fit categorically in the same place because they function under the state within a given civilization. Although Huntington’s argument addresses the broader geopolitical framework and context, the clash of civilizations does not always occur at the highest levels. In many ways, the current global struggle against international terrorist organizations in the Middle East is an inter-civilizational and intra-civilizational conflict. It is clear that there is a clash of civilizations on the nation state level between Western and Islamic civilizations; however, underlying this clash is an intra-civilizational clash of identity. Terrorist attacks are not only directed at Western targets, al-Qaeda has carried out attacks in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Pakistan. The extent to which domestic political factors motivate such extreme violent action is unclear, but it is safe to assume that domestic factors are among the most important factors provoking such extreme ideology. Huntington makes this argument the following way:

“...the increased salience of cultural identity is in large part ... the result of social-economic modernization at the individual level, where dislocation and alienation create the need for more meaningful identities, and at the societal level, where the enhanced

⁶¹ Ibid. 128.

⁶² Ibid. 128.

capabilities and power of non-Western societies stimulate the revitalization of indigenous identities and culture.”⁶³

Huntington further asserts that identity can only be defined in terms of the “other.” As civilizations reassert themselves on the world stage there will inevitably be conflict, because many will be explaining why “WE are not YOU.” Huntington believes this “is a constant in human history”⁶⁴ and that this stems from the following four factors:

- “1. Feelings of superiority (and occasionally inferiority) toward people who are perceived as being different;
2. Fear of and lack of trust in such people;
3. Difficulty of communication with them as a result of differences in language and what is considered civil behavior;
4. Lack of familiarity with the assumptions, motivations, social relationships, and social practices of other people.”⁶⁵

Now more than ever it is easy inform oneself on the civil behavior, language, and cultural differences that have served to divide civilizations throughout history; furthermore, “improvements in transportation and communication have produced more frequent, more intense, more symmetrical, and more inclusive interactions among people of different civilizations.”⁶⁶ Although the four factors listed above still play major roles in conflict between civilizations – they do not explain why civilizations clash. The sources of conflict between states are, according to Huntington, “control of people, territory, wealth, and resources, and relative power, that is the ability to impose one’s own values, culture, and institutions on another group as compared to that group’s ability to do that to you.”⁶⁷ These factors have been the source of conflict both within and between civilizations throughout history, but Huntington takes these factors to a more extreme level. In what might be the most controversial elements of his argument, Huntington claims that “it is

⁶³ Ibid. 129.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 129.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 129.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 129.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 129.

human to hate,”⁶⁸ and that conflict is ubiquitous. “For self definition and motivation people need enemies: competitors in business, rivals in achievement, opponents in politics. They naturally distrust and see as threats those who are different and have the capability to harm them.”⁶⁹ The notion that to hate is human might be difficult to accept but there have been relatively few, if any, times in human history where peace was maintained without violence.

One important element of Huntington’s argument with regard to international terrorist organizations is the notion of a core state. He argues that core states are filling the void left by the end of the Cold War. “In this world the core states of civilizations are sources of order within civilizations and, through negotiations with other core states, between civilizations.”⁷⁰ Core states tend to assist other culturally similar nations in collective advocacy for their interests against other civilizations. The one major civilization, according to Huntington, to lack a core state is the Islamic civilization. Although “Islam is intensifying its common consciousness,”⁷¹ the lack of a core state has opened doors to rogue organizations within the civilization that share a common identity. Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey have all asserted themselves as the core Islamic state. Competition for the core state position has increased the volatility and intensity of relations between states within the Islamic civilization. Organizations like al-Qaeda have asserted themselves, outside the framework of the state, as the champions of Islamic civilization – attempting to right the wrongs of prolonged periods of poor leadership.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 130.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 130.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 156.

⁷¹ Ibid. 155.

“Throughout Islam the small group and the great faith, the tribe and the ummah, have been the principal foci of loyalty and commitment, and the nation state has been less significant. In the Arab world, existing states have legitimacy problems because they are for the most part arbitrary, if not capricious, products of European imperialism, and their boundaries often did not even coincide with those of ethnic groups such as Berbers and Kurds. These states divided the Arab nation, but a Pan-Arab state, on the other hand has never materialized. In addition, the idea of sovereign nation states is incompatible with belief in the sovereignty of Allah and the primacy of the ummah. As a revolutionary movement, Islamist fundamentalism rejects the nation state in favor of the unity of Islam just as Marxism rejected it in favor of the unity of the international proletariat. The weakness of the nation state in Islam is also reflected in the fact that while numerous conflicts occurred between Muslim groups during the years after World War II, major wars between Muslim states were rare, the most significant ones involving Iraq and its neighbors.”⁷²

Flat world forces have contributed to the “increase in consciousness” that has mobilized the Muslim population en masse. This is problematic because “consciousness without cohesion is a source of weakness to Islam and a source of threat to other civilizations.”⁷³

If a core state does not assert itself within the Islamic civilization possessing the appropriate “economic resources, military power, organizational competence, and Islamic identity,”⁷⁴ then it is likely that rogue non-state actors will find refuge in the turmoil Islamic civilization.

Civilizational conflicts, according to Huntington, take two forms: 1- Fault line conflicts; and 2- Core state conflicts.⁷⁵ A fault line conflict is a civilizational clash on a small scale, or any civilizational conflict that is not between core states. “The Global War on Terror” is nothing more than a fault line conflict/war. Although international terrorists pose a serious threat, they do not pose the same threat that broad core state conflict poses. Core state conflicts will arise under two circumstances: 1- “The escalation of fault line conflicts between local groups as kin groups, including core states,”⁷⁶ and 2-

⁷² Ibid. 175.

⁷³ Ibid. 177.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 177.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 207-208.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 208.

“Changes in the global balance of power among civilizations.”⁷⁷ Currently, the flat world is undergoing a shift in the balance of civilizational power and fault line conflicts are escalating. Although the prospect of all-out core state warfare is, at the present, unlikely; the threats imposed by the rise of international terrorist organizations have broad consequences.

Huntington is quick to point out that resolution to fault line conflict is rare. “Fault line wars go through processes of intensification, expansion, containment, interruption, and, rarely, resolution.”⁷⁸ Fault line conflicts are often conflicts of identity. “Once started, fault line wars, like other communal conflicts, tend to take on a life of their own and to develop in an action-reaction pattern. Identities which had previously been multiple and casual become focused and hardened; communal conflicts are appropriately termed ‘identity wars.’”⁷⁹ As a conflict escalates it is only natural for either side to demonize their opponent, which only further escalates the conflict. A consideration of the rhetoric of both al-Qaeda and American politicians would reveal this process of demonization and the role of identity politics in fault line conflicts.

Civilizational clash is “tribal conflict on a global scale.”⁸⁰ As the world becomes flatter it is important to realize that what is “universalism to [some] is imperialism to the rest.”⁸¹ Globalization and the rise of Western power and institutions have affected the world's civilizations positively and negatively. The poor, disenfranchised, and ignored will assert their identity either within or without the broader global institutional framework and it is important for political leaders and citizens everywhere to understand

⁷⁷ Ibid. 209.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 266.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 266.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 207.

⁸¹ Ibid. 184.

the context within which these changes are occurring. Al-Qaeda was not brought into existence by a stork; real economic, social, cultural, and political factors acted to provoke the attitudes and ideologies embraced by these global outcasts. To ignore these factors would not only be ignorant, it could be dangerous.

Friedman and Huntington's descriptions of globalization create a strong framework within which the evolution of international terrorist organizations may be examined. These two works, with regard to international terrorist organizations, boil down to two main points: 1- Technology is changing the global geopolitical and social structure and is empowering individuals; and 2- Global structural changes (the flattening of the world) have resulted in the reassertion of identity by those whose interests have not been integrated into the new geopolitical system (civilizational clashes). The works of Friedman and Huntington are essential to the broader narrative about the causes, effects, and consequences of globalization. "The expansion of transportation and communication in the modern world has facilitated the... 'internationalization' of fault line conflicts."⁸² International terrorist organizations operate within the same global context that every world government and multinational corporation operates in; the difference is, they attempt to disrupt it. A broad application of Friedman and Huntington's theories will provide important insight into the evolution of international terrorist organizations in the flat world.

Al-Qaeda's Organizational Structure

International organizations, as Friedman points out, have had to adapt their organizational structure in order to evolve with the changing technological landscape. Friedman calls this process horizontalization, or the integration of the new flat world

⁸² Ibid. 254.

technologies into the organizational structure and day-to-day operations of the organization. Horizontalization is the opposite of vertical integration and threatens the hierarchy of the organization and is thus, in many ways, a risk for ideological organizations. International organizations have had to adopt the flat world platform in order to evolve with the changing technological landscape in the pursuit of profits and efficiency. Similarly, al-Qaeda has horizontalized, in part out of necessity, and as a consequence has developed a broad and flexible organizational structure capable of adapting easily to new circumstances. The evolution of al-Qaeda's organizational structure is the side effect of the aggressive pursuit of profits, but the calculated attempt to evade detection and law enforcement. The flat world technologies that have empowered organizations like al-Qaeda have also empowered law enforcement agencies.

The Information Age has not just had severe implications in the business sector but also for terrorism and organized crime. In the last 20 years, criminal and terrorist organizations have undergone their own versions of GE's "Workout" program. Terrorist and criminal organizations began to transform their own hierarchical structures into networks. Some, like al-Qaeda, expanded the size and importance of networks already imbedded in their traditional hierarchical organizations, whereas others evolved from a networked group into a more complex horizontal design. Unlike the business community, low profits did not drive these organizations to seek change; law enforcement and intelligence, which began to successfully root out subversive organizations, forced illegal armed groups to find new ways to evade authority and become more resilient. Criminals and terrorists needed to ensure that their organization would not collapse if the main leader or leaders were arrested or killed.⁸³

Consequently, al-Qaeda has needed to remain ahead of the technological curve and has quickly adapted to the new technological context.

On August 8, 2005 the Washington Post reported the following:

...Al-Qaeda has become the first guerrilla movement in history to migrate from physical space to cyberspace. With laptops and DVDs, in secret hideouts and at neighborhood Internet cafes, young code-writing jihadists have sought to replicate the training, communication, planning and preaching facilities they lost in Afghanistan with countless new locations on the Internet.⁸⁴

⁸³ Dishman, Chris, "The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28 (2005) 238-239.

The adoption of the flat world platform has caused al-Qaeda to drastically change its organizational structure. Having lost some of their brick-and-mortar training facilities, the organization has had to make the shift from a vertically oriented organizational structure to a horizontal structure. What this means is that al-Qaeda has integrated the flat world processes into their day-to-day operations and shifted authority into the hands of low and mid-level operatives. In other words, al-Qaeda has decentralized. As an ideological organization this might seem counterintuitive because most ideological organizations are hierarchical, yet al-Qaeda has been able to flatten and, in the process, maintain its ideological foundation. “Al-Qaeda’s structure enables it to wield direct and indirect control over a potent, far-flung force.”⁸⁵ This is in part due to al-Qaeda’s ability to maintain a vertical ideological center and conduct operations horizontally. “Leaders... are co-opted as and when necessary to serve as an integral part of al-Qaeda’s high command, which is run via a vertical leadership structure that provides strategic direction and tactical support to its horizontal network of compartmentalized cells and associate organizations.”⁸⁶

The most common word used to describe the horizontal elements of international terrorist organizations is network. A terrorist network is a system of interrelated and interconnected independent entities. Although the vertical leadership of al-Qaeda maintains the organizational ideology, the horizontal elements of the organizational

⁸⁴ Coll, Steven and Susan Glasser, “Terrorists Turn to the Web as Base of Operations” *Washington Post*, August 7, 2005, Accessed Online: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/05/AR2005080501138_pf.html

⁸⁵ Gunaratna, Rohan. *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), 75.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 73.

structure are, in many ways, autonomous. “The constituent groups of al-Qaeda operate as a loose coalition, each with its own command, control and communication structures.”⁸⁷ Although these groups operate, communicate, and organize themselves autonomously, these networks of independent cells are also interdependent and capable of uniting to accomplish specific tasks and objectives. Al-Qaeda’s ability to adapt and evolve to the changing global technological and security environment has helped the organization survive the battle it is fighting against the international security organizations intent on their eradication.

Al-Qaeda is able to avoid detection because the individual cells and the broader network itself is, for the most part, divided ethnically, nationally, and along familial lines. These “nodes have no formal structure and hierarchy”⁸⁸ and are not fixed to any geographic location. This helps members avoid detection while planning, preparing, and executing various operations.

As a global multinational, al-Qaeda makes its constituent nationalities and ethnic groups, of which there are several dozen responsible for a particular geographic region. Although its *modus operandi* is cellular, familial relationships play a key role. As a cultural and social network, al-Qaeda members recruit from among their own nationalities, families and friends. After training is completed, the very best of new recruits are integrated among and assigned to work within one of these families.⁸⁹

This notion of family helps al-Qaeda maintain its organizational cohesion. Although the network is divided ethnically and nationally, the belief that a common ideology unites the various members as a broad family bridges the gaps that might otherwise threaten the sustainability of the organization. To reinforce this notion of familial relationships al-Qaeda members refer to each other as “brothers.” This is not uncommon to religious organizations, especially Islam, and illumines the nature of the relationships maintained

⁸⁷ Ibid. 76.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 128.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 129.

by members of the organization. Some have argued that al-Qaeda is “the natural offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood”⁹⁰ and this is another reason why the notion of family permeates the al-Qaeda organization. Religious principles and the notion of family are the factors that give al-Qaeda its global reach since both these two factors transcend nationality and race.

Another factor contributing to the cohesion of al-Qaeda’s organizational structure is language. The lingua franca of any international organization is important to the efficiency of communication within the organization. The absence of a lingua franca can greatly hamper organizational communication and the ability of an organization to function effectively. Despite its international nature, language has not been a serious problem for al-Qaeda. One of the arguments used in support of Islam as a religion is that the Koran has not gone through the same translation processes that religious books like the Bible have. Thus, Muslims will learn Arabic in order to understand the Koran, and this is true for many Muslims regardless of national origin. Arabic is the lingua franca of literate Muslims, and as such has facilitated communication within international Islamic organizations.

Common ideology, language, and even family structures have sustained al-Qaeda even under intense international scrutiny. It is not enough, for organizations like al-Qaeda, to simply survive. Having engaged their enemies in armed conflict and promoted suicide attacks, al-Qaeda needs to have an extensive training program that teaches their methods to new recruits. The flat world platform has allowed al-Qaeda to continue training its operatives despite the loss of a variety of training camps. Horizontalization, the incorporation of the flat world paradigm, has shifted training grounds from tangible

⁹⁰ Ibid. 128.

terrestrial locations to highly mobile intangible and digital locations. The phenomena like uploading and in-forming, that Friedman describes so well, have played a vital role in the promotion, growth, and development of al-Qaeda. For example, al-Qaeda:

...has produced several training manuals of which its standard reference work is the multivolume, 7,000-page *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad*. The first ten volumes cover tactics; security and intelligence; handguns; first aid; explosives; grenades and mines; tanks; manufacturing (of arms and explosives); topography and land surveys; and weapons (general).⁹¹

The Internet and other flat world forces have enabled this information to be uploaded and accessed anywhere in the globe. Potential terrorists are no longer required to travel to remote and isolated areas in order to train as operatives. Issues of jurisdiction have made it difficult for international security agencies to police the servers of other countries; and thus, the ability to restrict the information uploaded to the Internet is limited. When one website is shut down, a mirror site pops-up on another server in another country somewhere else in the world. Consequently, the need for puppet governments and rogue states is diminished because the Internet is, in many ways, a lawless world. Terrorist operatives can access potentially lethal information online anonymously without the need to interact person-to-person with other operatives.

This widespread access to the once guarded terrorist know-how has empowered individuals who might not even be affiliated with al-Qaeda to participate in the organization's jihad. Although rigorous training is still crucial to the more specialized and elite operatives, like those involved in the financial dealings of the terrorist organization, access to information has empowered even the layman to become a terrorist. "Al-Qaeda's training manuals, ideology and long-term strategies are no longer an exclusive domain under the control of a centralized leadership. They are out in

⁹¹ Ibid. 93.

cyberspace and easily accessible. Anyone so determined can participate in the al-Qaeda project.”⁹² The flattening forces have completely transformed how individuals communicate and access information.

Al-Qaeda is unique in organizational terms: with a central leadership functioning as figurehead and inspiration, the day-to-day logistics have become the domain of field commanders in more than forty countries around the world. Again, this is possible because of the Internet, which provides, maintains and updates the ideological and strategic framework within which these commanders – and indeed, any group or individual – can operate.⁹³

It is clear that the most important major force that has facilitated the growth of al-Qaeda is the Internet. The consequences of the Internet are tremendous, both good and bad. The Internet has made it possible for remote ideologues to matter. Where geography, finance, and the international political structure isolated and otherwise limited this scope of these rogue organization in the past, technology has empowered these individuals, insofar as they adopt the flat world platform, to act from within the system against the system. Although the benefits of globalization have been widespread and significant, the dark side of global forces is becoming increasingly apparent. Access to the Internet, language capabilities, and some degree of perseverance can bring the terrorist know-how to your door. The broad al-Qaeda umbrella now encompasses those groups that act and organize independent of the organization or otherwise buy into the ideology.

The most sophisticated of al-Qaeda’s organizational structure is the financial element. The digitization of currency has opened doors to new types of financial exploitation and rogue international organizations have been quick to exploit these new financial gaps. However, financial institutions have quickly responded to the gaps created by technological advancement and globalization and strict financial regulation

⁹² Atwan, Abdel Bari. *The Secret History of al Qaeda*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 281.

⁹³ Ibid. 282.

and oversight have risen to meet the new challenges. As a result, rogue organizations hoping to exploit the system have to remain at the cutting edge of technology and ahead of the law enforcement curve. Maintaining an international terrorist organization is not free- and al-Qaeda has had to raise funds to maintain its expansive international organization. It is estimated that the yearly costs of maintaining the al-Qaeda organization are in the 50 million dollar range; although Osama's personal financial holdings are substantial, they are not sufficient to support even half of the necessary annual budget.⁹⁴ Consequently, due to the underground nature of the organization al-Qaeda has had to develop an intricate financing operation. "Comparison with other such networks reveal that al-Qaeda has built the most complex, robust and resilient money-generating and money-moving network yet seen."⁹⁵ Al-Qaeda finances its operation through a variety of channels both legal and illegal.

One of the primary sources of revenue, since direct state sponsorship has declined in the wake of 9/11, is indirect organizational and philanthropic support. Wealthy individuals have been able to support the al-Qaeda organization through their contributions and their charitable foundations. "Wealthy Arab benefactors in the Middle East, including respected individuals in the UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, are al-Qaeda's financial mainstays."⁹⁶ No matter how wealthy these benefactors are, ideology is not the only factor that motivates wealthy individuals to contribute to the al-Qaeda organization. As an organization al-Qaeda consists of skilled accountants and other financial managers who maintain and invest the funds that they acquire through these various channels. The financial success of the organization requires skilled and

⁹⁴ Gunaratna, 82.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 81.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 82.

frugal management and investment of the funds that will maintain the organization in perpetuity.

The resilience of al-Qaeda's financial infrastructure is primarily due to the compartmentalized structure it has adhered to since its inception. It assigns a high priority to financial training and management as well as the sustained generation and investment of funds. Al-Qaeda's finance and business committee – comprised of professional bankers, accountants and financiers – manages the group's funds across four continents.⁹⁷

The complexity of the financial management underscores the broader complexity of the organization. This complexity bespeaks the global flattening forces that have so drastically transmuted the remote ideologue into an international political force.

In order to avoid detection al-Qaeda must cloak itself in legitimacy, and thus the financial specialists in al-Qaeda must make their various means of acquiring funds, at the very least, appear legitimate. "To facilitate... transactions, many businesses and banks in the Gulf are used as fronts, enabling al-Qaeda to conduct business under cover... Al-Qaeda also siphons funds from legitimate Islamic charities and NGOs that it infiltrates."⁹⁸ Al-Qaeda uses this complex web of institutions to exploit the system in such a way as to underline the argument that al-Qaeda is not simply adapted to the new international system but so aware of the system's nuances as to be ahead of the security, technological, financial, and political curve. If it were not so then al-Qaeda would not be able to actively pursue its ideological goals from within the institution itself. "Al-Qaeda's clandestine penetration of legitimate public and private organizations included one charity that became the unwitting target of such activities and whose board at the time included President Pervais Musharraf of Pakistan."⁹⁹ The degree to which al-Qaeda has penetrated the system is not yet fully understood, but it is safe to assume that they

⁹⁷ Ibid. 81.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 82-83.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 100.

function successfully enough within the international system as to survive the intense international financial scrutiny following the 9/11 attacks. “Al-Qaeda’s financial network has suffered significantly since 9/11, but it remains largely in tact.

As a compliment to its illegal activities al-Qaeda also owns and runs a variety of legitimate business operations. Where possible al-Qaeda will raise funds legitimately to protect the funds that they raise. The following is a vivid description taken from a US trial of the depth and breadth of the al-Qaeda’s financial institutions:

Where possible al-Qaeda preferred to raise funds via legitimate businesses and hence eschewed narcotics or the smuggling of migrants [although those are avenues through which al-Qaeda has generated revenue]. For example Blessed Fruits exported fruits and vegetables; Al Hijra Construction build roads; International al-Ikhlas manufactured sweetmeats; Bank of Zoological Resources manufactured genes for hybrid cattle; Kasalla produced corn hybrids and other agricultural produce; the Happ Tannery in Khartoum produced leather. Al-Qaeda also owned food-processing and furniture-making companies and was heavily involved in import-export, purchasing bicycles from Azerbaijan, Maz trucks from Russia, Zetor tractors from Slovakia and cars from Dubai. Among the goods it imported were heavy machinery, fertilizer, sugar, iron, insecticide and machine tools; its exports included ostriches from Kenya, wood from Turkey, lemons, olives, raisins, and nuts from Tajikistan, diamonds from Tanzania, lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, precious stones from Uganda and camels from Sudan. Al-Qaeda also had a worldwide network of investments and small businesses. For instance, it owned boats and had a fishing business in Mombassa; in Sweden it invested in the hospital equipment industry; in Denmark in dairy products and in Norway in paper mills.¹⁰⁰

The variety of industries in which al-Qaeda has interest probably rivals some of the worlds most advanced and complex multinational corporations. Ironically it is this system, from which al-Qaeda benefits so much, that they are at odds with. Al-Qaeda’s ideology will be examined in more depth later in this paper, but here it is enough to simply point out that other than military and political targets on 9/11, al-Qaeda targeted the symbols of the international financial system. Al-Qaeda has benefited from the flat world platform that has enabled the organization to evolve in its international complexity and scope. Without the integration Friedman’s flatteners it is unlikely that an organization like al-Qaeda could sustain and manage itself.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 90.

Adding one more level of complexity to al-Qaeda's financial organization, al-Qaeda engages in a number of illicit financial activities that generate revenue. In Europe for example, it is estimated that the al-Qaeda organization raises approximately one million dollars a month from credit card fraud.¹⁰¹ Al-Qaeda has even established a specific training camp for the sole purpose of training operatives in financial crime with special focus on credit card fraud and counterfeiting.¹⁰² Consider the following:

At the request of al-Qaeda Afghanistan, the European network bought equipment from unsuspecting legitimate companies for encoding and decoding credit cards... They have purchased credit card manufacturing machines on which bogus cards have been produced, obtained card details from shops and restaurants, skimmed electronic data from cards bought from petty criminals and surfed the internet for card details using web-search engines.¹⁰³

Al-Qaeda is an expansive organization that operates in a complex global financial system, and as such has had to evolve in tandem with the system that they have in many ways rejected.¹⁰⁴ The development of this organization is not merely explained by the forces of globalization, it exemplifies them.

The Crime and Terror Nexus

A continuation of the examination of al-Qaeda's illicit activities will reveal that there is increasing evidence that suggests that international terrorist organizations are collaborating with international and local criminal organizations. Friedman would call this outsourcing. Although al-Qaeda's organization is complex and a number of

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 87.

¹⁰² Ibid. 87.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 87.

¹⁰⁴ Not to editorialize excessively, but the moral flexibility required to engage in such illicit and, by religious standards, immoral activities is difficult to understand for an organization that bases its core ideology on religious fundamentalism. Clearly terrorism itself is immoral, that is without question, but they have found a way to justify their actions using religious principles. It is perplexing however that the self-proclaimed pious can engage in activities that no religious principle can justify. Theft and fraud are immoral by any religious standard and it would require more than moral flexibility to justify such actions, it would require moral gymnastics!

specialists operate under its banner, it is still too small an organization to autonomously operate as efficiently as it does through strategic partnerships. “Many argue that the need for financing and changes in the organizational structure have led International Terrorist Organizations to collaborate with criminal groups.”¹⁰⁵ Through outsourcing an organization can partner with other more specialized and efficient organizations. Friedman argues that outsourcing allows small organizations to act big. Being that al-Qaeda is a terrorist organization and engages in illegal activities, it is only natural that the organization would conduct business with other organizations that operate outside the law.

The “flattening” of these groups is creating new and dangerous opportunities for collaboration between criminals and terrorists. The actions of criminal underlings or terrorist operatives are not constrained because criminal or terrorist “headquarters” are no longer able to micromanage employees. Lower to mid-level criminals and terrorists are taking advantage of their independence to form synergistic ties between the two groups.¹⁰⁶

One of the key elements of Friedman’s flat world paradigm is the notion that in the flat world individuals are empowered and capable of collaboration without being part of a sizeable international organization with significant resources. As indicated above, mid-level terrorists focused on raising funds have attempted to maximize their efficiency by working with groups that might be more specialized and efficient than they are themselves.

The transformation of terrorists and criminal organizations from hierarchy to network has dangerous and largely unnoticed implications. With the emergence of decentralized organizations, a centuries-old dynamic between hierarchical terrorist and criminal organizations has begun to change. Criminals and terrorists now have few reservations about cooperating with each other. Many will create long-term strategic alliances to harness each other’s expertise – making their groups more dangerous and elusive than ever.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Dishman, 246.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 267.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 249.

One of the main arguments of this paper is that terrorist organizations operate within the same global technological, economic, and social framework that other legal organizations do; and because flat world forces have led to a global economic and financial integration, it comes as no surprise that there is a global criminal integration that mirrors the broader global integration.

Here it is important to define what collaboration means in the context of criminal and terror network synergy. Collaboration in this context simply signifies the cooperation of two or more groups on a specific task or project. It does not mean that there are broader criminal alliances that have been made to create super criminal networks, or that the goals of either organization have changed. It is a simple attempt, on the part of these groups, to maximize their resources and does not indicate a shift in purpose. “Scholarly research suggests that, while the modus operandi of criminal groups, insurgents, and terrorists most often diverge, mounting evidence suggests the interaction among or between these entities is increasing.”¹⁰⁸ The flat world platform, especially the horizontalization of organizational structure, has opened doors to and empowered international outlaws.

Although relatively little is known about all the crime and terror nexus, there is enough evidence to suggest that collaboration between criminal and terror networks is frequent and important to the organizations themselves. The primary goal of criminal and terrorist network collaboration is financial. As described above, al-Qaeda relies on illicit as well as legitimate operations to raise funds to support its widespread network. A Defense Intelligence Agency report examining this nexus in Afghanistan and Iraq

¹⁰⁸ Oehme, Chester G., “Terrorists, Insurgents, and Criminals – Growing Nexus?” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31 (2008) 81.

indicates, although a narrow examination, the amount of collaboration that takes place. The report suggests that terrorists and criminal networks have collaborated to raise funds in the Afghan narco-economy and broader drug trade, money laundering, arms trafficking kidnapping, oil smuggling and other theft scams, bribery, embezzlement, fraud, and extortion. The report suggests “they [terrorist organizations] frequently must turn to sophisticated criminal groups for these specialized activities, essentially out-sourcing when it is convenient, efficient, or necessary to maintain security.”¹⁰⁹ Clearly, the degree of collaboration and criminal activity in Afghanistan and Iraq is much higher than in other countries because the central governments of each state are weak and law enforcement is corrupt, but these findings reveal that the collaboration between criminal and terror networks is multifaceted and diverse, violent and sophisticated, subversive and explicit. These strategic partnerships have posed significant problems for the security forces in both Afghanistan and Iraq because it is unclear if the military or local law enforcement have jurisdiction over these hybrid organizations; and furthermore, what tactics should be employed in order to combat these organizations most effectively. Collaboration between criminal and terrorist organizations moves both networks further into the shadows and makes security and the enforcement of law all the more complicated.

The ways that terrorist and criminal organizations collaborate, as noted above, varies dramatically and includes a number of activities that require very specific skills and connections. The common terrorist activities are precarious enough with respect to the evasion of law enforcement without the complication of other illicit schemes aimed at the procurement of filthy lucre. Some of the most intense regulation and scrutiny is given

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 85.

to the international financial markets; nobody wants their money or commodities stolen. Consequently terrorist groups must either acquire the requisite skills or collaborate with other more specialized organizations. “Whether through formal or informal financial systems, traditional criminal groups, especially those with transnational structures, have become particularly important because of their lower profile and acumen for placing, layering, and integrating illicit funds.”¹¹⁰ As previously noted, this is in principle no different from the various forms of outsourcing that Friedman draws upon to support his claim that the world is flattening. The outsourcing of criminal activity has only strengthened both the international criminal and terror networks.

In the case of Iraq and Afghanistan it is no surprise that, the result of weak central governments, as the demand for the support of terror increases the quantity of terrorist support supplied will increase as well. Clearly current trends in Iraq and Afghanistan are not only the result of the al-Qaeda organization, but the following two crime statistics reveal the amount of money at stake and the potential overlap of terrorist organizations and organized crime networks. The Iraq Study Group estimated that 150,000 to 500,000 barrels of oil are stolen every day.¹¹¹ At the current market price per barrel the potential dollar amount of oil stolen daily is somewhere between 15 and 50 million dollars. Furthermore, nearly 70% of the total crimes reported in Iraq are kidnappings.¹¹² This is because kidnapping is the simplest way of raising funds; weak law enforcement and a quick ransom make it possible to raise funds with minimal effort. Through official channels an average of two kidnappings are reported daily; and the average ransom is in

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 86.

¹¹¹ Baker, James A. and Lee H. Hamilton, et al., *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward – A New Approach*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 23.

¹¹² Oehme, 86.

the 25,000 dollar range although some reports have indicated that Coalition governments have paid “multi-million-dollar ransoms for their officials and citizens.”¹¹³ Both criminal and terrorist organizations stand to gain substantially from state instability and have a substantial financial interest in maintaining their lucrative relationships.

A CRS report from 2007 suggests that the global collaborative nexus is even more ominous than the relationships between terror and criminal networks in Iraq and Afghanistan. The report focuses specifically on terrorist cybercrime capabilities; however, it describes the complex relationship between criminal and terrorist networks.

Linkages between criminal and terror groups may allow terror networks to expand and undertake large attacks internationally by leveraging criminal sources, money, and transit routes. For example, observers speculate that Aftab Ansari, a criminal suspect located in Dubai, used ransom money earned from prior kidnappings to assist with funding for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Also, London police officials believe that terrorists obtained the high-quality explosives used for the 2005 bombings through involvement with an Eastern European black market. The recent subway and bus bombings in the U.K. also indicate that groups of terrorists may be active within other countries that have large computerized infrastructures, along with a large, highly skilled information technology workforce... Officials of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, reported in 2003 that 14 of the 36 groups found on the U.S. State Department’s list of foreign terrorist organizations were involved in drug trafficking. Consequently, DEA officials reportedly argued that the war on drugs and the war on terrorism are and should be linked.¹¹⁴

As outlined in the above citation, the terrorist problem is much more complex and the implications much farther reaching than common stereotype would suggest. Involvement in international drug trafficking, arms and human smuggling, and financial crimes are not the type of activities that an impoverished group ideologues participate in from their remote Afghan caves. Some reports suggest that terrorist organizations have now involved themselves in the counterfeiting of intellectual property, “which can be even more lucrative than drug trafficking.”¹¹⁵ Only the flat world forces would enable an

¹¹³ Ibid. 85.

¹¹⁴ Rollins, John and Clay Wilson, “Terrorist Capabilities and Cyberattack: Overview and Policy Issues,” *CRS Report for Congress*, January 22, 2007, 20-21.

¹¹⁵ Rollins, 21.

ideologically extreme organization like al-Qaeda to counterfeit and traffic intellectual property products.

The flattening of al-Qaeda's organizational structure has increased the ability and number of opportunities to collaborate with other organizations in the pursuit of their ideological objectives. This collaboration greatly complicates and even muddles the new technological battlefield terrain. The war on terror will not be won if it is waged solely against the terrorist organizations themselves. Similarly, the war on drugs will not be won simply by fighting the drug cartels. The financial interests at stake are tremendous and these various criminal and terrorist elements will continue to adapt to the changing landscape in order to protect their substantial interests. Friedman puts it this way:

Individuals who never dreamt they could work together, and jobs no one ever dreamt could be shifted from country to country, are suddenly on the move, now that many traditional walls are gone. This same platform has also blown away our ceilings. Individuals who never dreamt they could upload – upload their opinions on blogs, or upload a new political vision, or upload an encyclopedia, or upload a new piece of software – suddenly found that they can have a global impact on the world, as individuals. With the traditional ceilings gone, they can push upward and outward in ways that were previously unimaginable.¹¹⁶

Although the flat world Friedman describes is much more positive, the same forces that have blown away the walls and ceilings for individuals working legally within the system have worked to empower individuals who are working illegally within the same system. The collaborative efforts of criminal and terrorist networks are an indicator of the flat world forces. And much like the international economic system, it will be difficult if not impossible to unravel the tangled web of criminal and terror networks.

Al-Qaeda's Technological Competency

Following an examination of al-Qaeda's organizational structure and collaborative evolutions, an examination of the technological competency of the

¹¹⁶ Friedman, 232.

organization is only natural. It has already been shown that organizationally al-Qaeda has adopted important elements of the flat world platform – this is in part the result of strategic planning, organizational growth, and the need to evade law enforcement. But to take advantage of the new open technological doors and to survive in the long-term, organizations like al-Qaeda will have to have a high level of technological competency. Security and law enforcement agencies will continue to close these open doors and this will increase the need for sophisticated technological competency among terrorist groups. Furthermore, as a consequence of the growing threat posed by rogue international groups, tighter border security and immigration measures are being implemented and this will, in many ways, geographically isolate some members of these organizations.

Terrorist's use of the Internet and other telecommunications devices is growing both in terms of reliance for supporting organizational activities and for gaining expertise to achieve operational goals. Tighter physical and border security may also encourage terrorists and extremists to try to use other types of weapons to attack the United States.¹¹⁷

The new security frontier, in many ways, is digital. Terror and criminal networks have pursued cybercrime as a means through which to procure sensitive and personal information. This is not, however, the limit of cybercriminal activity.

Analysts suggest that coordinated cyberattacks could result in enough economic disruption, fear, and even civilian deaths to qualify as cyberterrorism. One concern is that terrorist organizations would enhance a physical attack with a cyberattack that might otherwise disrupt communication or other infrastructure so as to debilitate the ability to respond to the physical attack.¹¹⁸ In the digital age, despite digital intangibility, the digital threat is real and potentially devastating. Reliance on the flat world platform has rendered many vulnerable to new threats. As Sun Tzu suggests, we must “know our

¹¹⁷ Rollins, Summary.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 4.

enemy” and thus the following is an inventory of what is known about the technological competency of al-Qaeda as an organization.

In many ways, it seems as though the integration of technology into al-Qaeda’s organizational framework is incongruent with the basic philosophies of the organization. After all, Osama bin Laden refused all education except Koranic education to his children.¹¹⁹ Contemporarily however, al-Qaeda leaders are promoting the study of the computer sciences:

Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad, founder of the radical Islamic group al-mahajiroun, referred to ‘thousands of bin Laden supporters currently studying computer science as a way to support the cause,’ averring that ‘all types of technical means, including the Internet, are examined now in the light of their application in the large-scale war against the West.’¹²⁰

Although, to some extent, the integration of the flat world platform into the organizational structure is inconsistent with the fundamental religious principles that supposedly guide the organization, it is clear that al-Qaeda sees these potential ideological conflicts in terms of the broader war against the West and does not only justify the flat world platform, but encourage familiarity with the flat world platform. This familiarity with new technology has extended al-Qaeda’s reach and “enabled it to radicalize and empower armies of new recruits by shaping their general world view.”¹²¹ Technological competency is no longer a doctrine of multinational corporations, it is a critical element of the al-Qaeda ideology.

The Internet is the primary technological tool for the al-Qaeda organization. Internet technology facilitates marketing of the organization, communication between

¹¹⁹ Bergen, 384.

¹²⁰ Atwan, 123.

¹²¹ Brachman, Jarret M., “High-Tech Terror: Al-Qaeda’s Use of New Technology” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 30 (2006) 150.

networks, propagation of ideology, and access to global media; and al-Qaeda has effectively exploited the opportunities offered by the Internet.

The Internet is a multipurpose tool and weapon. It can be used to communicate one-to-one or to millions; it can be used to convey hidden information, instructions or plans; and since computers control the majority of the developed world's infrastructure, it is a chink in the West's armour, easily penetrated by dedicated hackers¹²²

The importance of the Internet to the global economy, social networks, and global communication networks cannot be understated. As Friedman suggests, it is unlikely, as a crucial part of the flat world platform, to disintegrate; and as noted, our dependence on the Internet is both a cause for the strength and weakness of the global system of governance. Al-Qaeda has not been slow to catch on, the growth in number and sophistication of jihadist websites is evidence of this. In 2006 experts suggested that there were upwards of 4,500 websites dedicated to the al-Qaeda organization.¹²³ “The internet has become a key element in the al-Qaeda training, planning and logistics, and cyberspace a legitimate field of battle. Some commentators have gone so far as to declare that al-Qaeda is the first Web-directed guerilla network.”¹²⁴ Of the many benefits of the Internet to an organization like al-Qaeda one of the most important is relatively secure communication. Whether it is Internet telephone, e-mail, discussion boards, or encrypted photographs the Internet provides the ability to communicate anonymously, secretively, and securely. Without the Internet, and technological competency of Internet technology, it is unlikely that al-Qaeda could communicate, organize, plan, and raise funds as efficiently as it does. The Internet is the weak rogue state that organizations like al-Qaeda have needed to pursue their ideological agenda.

¹²² Atwan, 124-125.

¹²³ Ibid. 127.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 122.

Communication on the Internet has changed what voices are relevant and which ones are not. No longer do a few control the ability to disseminate information en masse. The Internet acts as the largest and loudest megaphone in the history of the world. It is now possible for an individual, no matter who they are, to post an uncensored opinion or message that millions of individuals around the world can access. None other than the audience determines the relevance of the message. This is ironic in a context where, in many places, massive media conglomerates control the airwaves. Through these new channels al-Qaeda is able to promote their ideology and all interested have access to the pertinent information.

Similarly, al-Qaeda members can engage in various forms of informational *cyberjihad*. Al-Qaeda leadership encourages the technologically competent to “participate in fighting the broad public relations war on Islam and hacking into and destroying Western websites especially morally corrupt websites [like pornographic websites].”¹²⁵ The flat world platform does not only afford al-Qaeda the access to a global audience; it also permits a rogue illegal organization like al-Qaeda to wage a “public relations” campaign. Essentially, the Internet has enabled al-Qaeda to mass market itself; something that would have not been possible otherwise. This technological competence has enabled the al-Qaeda membership to pursue a sort of moral *cyberactivism* in the pursuit of their ideals, like the hacking and disruption of pornographic websites. This reveals how competent certain of the al-Qaeda organization are; and one can argue consequently, that members of al-Qaeda are more advanced than most Internet users in the West. This is, in part, a result of necessity, but also one of ideology and capability. If it were not possible to effectively wage a *cyberactivism*

¹²⁵ Ibid. 123

campaign it is unlikely that al-Qaeda's leadership would promote hacking and other forms of *cyberjihad* in order to reach its ideological goals. Thus, it is clear that there is widespread technological competence among al-Qaeda members. Contrast this with similar ideological groups in the United States, where the Internet is more widely available, and few activist groups take their ideology to the digital realm in an attempt to shut down the industries they find so offensive. It is clear that the great enabler of al-Qaeda has been the Internet. It has facilitated the promotion of the organization and created a new landscape within which to wage their war of ideology.

The Internet and computer technology has made it possible for al-Qaeda to create and launch their own traditional media campaigns. Al-Qaeda consistently produces and releases video statements both online and through more traditional channels, like the international media. The level of technological competence is evident by the way that al-Qaeda releases their propaganda videos. "Al-Qaeda when it has released propaganda videos has been known to release it in a variety of formats – cell phone, low quality for dialup and high-resolution to make their videos more widely available."¹²⁶ Al-Qaeda promotes itself much like a Hollywood movie production company produces its newest film. When either organization wants to promote a certain message or film, it will release the video in a variety of formats online and make parts of their message or film available to the traditional media. One video that garnered substantial media attention, which is still available online through a simple Google search, was entitled "Baghdad Sniper." The video is fifteen minutes in length and is a compilation of recorded sniper attacks against US troops in Iraq. The video has its own graphics, transitions, music, video effects, and subtitles and shows a significant number of American casualties. Millions of individuals

¹²⁶ Ibid. 124.

all over the globe watched this video online and a number of global media outlets covered the release of the video. Access to global media and media production technologies have enabled organizations like al-Qaeda to enter hundreds of thousands of homes worldwide. Media savvy has not only promoted the al-Qaeda organization but has also given credence to new al-Qaeda leaders. “Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers has averaged nine online communications a day; at least 180 statements appeared in the first three weeks of July 2005. No al-Qaeda operation in Iraq occurs without being filmed, and the videos are uploaded immediately. With such worldwide exposure, al-Zarqawi has become a household name.”¹²⁷

The level of technological competency is not well understood; but it is clear that, in the aggregate, al-Qaeda competently and effectively exploits Internet technology in the pursuit of their objectives. Al-Qaeda is a technologically sophisticated and competent organization; this is something that policy makers must take into consideration when developing strategies aimed at the eradication of organizations like al-Qaeda. Some analysts suggest:

The United States is gradually losing the online war against terrorists. Rather than aggressively pursuing its enemies, the U.S. government has adopted a largely defensive strategy... In the meantime, terrorists and their sympathizers, unhindered by bureaucratic inertia and unchallenged by Western governments, have reorganized their operations to take advantage of the Internet's more prosaic properties. The U.S. government is mishandling the growing threat *because it misunderstands terrorists*.¹²⁸

As shown, al-Qaeda has developed enough technological competency to covertly communicate, wage cyberjihad, market its agenda, distribute propaganda video, and conduct public relations campaigns. Technological competency indicates that the flat world platform has not merely acted upon the organization from the outside, but that

¹²⁷ Ibid. 125.

¹²⁸ Kohlmann, Evan F., “The Real Online Terrorist Threat,” *Foreign Affairs* 85 (2006) 115.

these technologies have been integrated into the system to the degree that operatives and sympathizers have effectively and efficiently exploited them. Technology has become so important to the organization that al-Qaeda leadership have encouraged the study of information technology as a compliment to jihad and the study of the Koran. Research suggests that al-Qaeda understands the benefits of technological competency while “senior counterterrorism officials refuse to even pay lip service to the need for such reforms.”¹²⁹

Al-Qaeda – Clash and Ideology

Civilizations, according to Huntington, are cultural entities; and as shown, the global flattening forces have caused organizations the world over to undergo substantial changes. These global changes have affected the common beliefs, customs, practices, and values in every society touched by these flattening forces. The social norms of yesteryear are not the same as the social norms of today. Consequently, in order to preserve their ways of life, many around the world fight against these global forces. Economies, governments, industries, the environment, and societies worldwide have, in many ways, been forced to evolve to the rapidly changing flat world platform. Andrew Sullivan describes these sentiments from the Western perspective thus:

These are bewildering times. This would be true on a purely social and economic plane. But it is also true in the human consciousness. Traditional societies have ceded to far more dynamic ones. Where once many towns and even cities in the West could assume broadly shared cultural and religious values, today that is decreasingly the case... It should be no surprise, then, that a world full of such loss is also a world full of resurgent conservatism. A period of such intense loss and cultural disorientation is a time when the urge to conserve what we have left is most profound.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Ibid. 116.

¹³⁰ Sullivan, Andrew, *The Conservative Soul: Fundamentalism, Freedom, and the Future of the Right*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 14-15.

If such feelings of loss are so prevalent among Western societies, how great must these sentiments be amidst those from where the flat world platform did not originate. The flat world platform, while empowering millions, has left similar numbers “disoriented” and disenfranchised. Some individuals, as a direct result of globalization, have lost their autonomy and have become dependent on a new economic and social system that they do not understand. In other cases, global forces have infringed on the sacred and provoked violent responses. In any case, the flat world is not without consequence and despite the multiplicity of benefits that many stand to receive from this platform those adversely affected will be slow to self-abnegate for others to benefit.

Huntington, when developing his theory of civilizational fault lines, was addressing international political relations – primarily state-to-state relationships. He was writing to describe the nature of international politics in a post-Cold War era. The events of 9/11 legitimized Huntington’s theories even though his theory did not directly address terrorism. Other scholars have, however, attempted to describe the root causes of terrorism. One of the early findings of the Global Transnational Terrorism Project was that there is no “root cause” of terrorism. “...The authors found there was no evidence of specific individual characteristics associated with a predisposition toward participation in terrorism. Similarly, they found that there were no general “root causes” that lead to terrorism in Southeast Asia.”¹³¹ Consequently, for the purposes of this paper, because there is no clear cause of terrorism it is important to examine the ideological context and factors that drive the al-Qaeda organization. As shown, al-Qaeda has drawn upon individuals who are socially, economically, ethnically, nationally, and racially diverse.

¹³¹ Magouirk, Justin et al., “Connecting Terrorist Networks,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (2008) 3.

And thus, the causes and motivations for terrorism will vary among groups. One commonality, however, is the shared ideology of the organization's members. To best understand what motivates al-Qaeda to act out so violently, an examination of their ideology is necessary.

Huntington's notion of civilizational clash sets international relations in the context of culture. Although culture is a relevant and important aspect of international political relations, it is abstract and misunderstood because culture is the word used to describe those intangible unquantifiable behaviors, values, and customs that make groups distinct. This is problematic to the analysis of contemporary theory and terrorism because culture is abstract and it would be unwise to contrast specific characteristics of different cultures or groups in order to determine the causality of civilizational clash.

Noted theorist Edward Hall wrote:

The surface problem in analyzing any culture is that people maintain rather stereotyped pictures of themselves that may not fit the multiple facts, levels, and dimensions of which all cultures are composed... Culturally based paradigms place obstacles in the path to understanding because culture equips each of us with built-in blinders, hidden and unstated assumptions that control our thoughts and block the unraveling of cultural processes. Yet, man without culture is not man. One cannot interpret any aspect of culture apart from, and without the cooperation of, the members of a given culture.¹³²

Al-Qaeda is one element of a civilization, and, as Huntington acknowledges, the narrow differences within a civilization are natural and do not pose the same threat that differences between civilizations pose. Huntington furthers his argument by suggesting that cultural identity is defined in terms of the other because, as noted, culture is abstract and the "isness" of culture is unclear. Thus, "is-not-ness" is the paradigm within which civilizational cultural identity is formed. Simply, we are what we are not. Despite the difficulties stemming from the abstract nature of culture, an examination of ideology will

¹³² Hall, Edward T., *Beyond Culture*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 219-220.

illumine those factors, cultural, religious, or otherwise, that have provoked so many to sympathize with al-Qaeda as a social movement.

Although culture is abstract, religious differences, in many cases, are not. Distinct doctrines, specific hierarchy, and scripture all clearly delineate the various world religions. The religious framework helps individuals find an identity. This is important to the salience of an organization like al-Qaeda where religious identity transcends the various cultural, geographic, and national differences of the membership and helps the organization cohere. Religious identity improves al-Qaeda's ability to recognize their enemies. It is careless, however, to characterize this global conflict in terms of religion. While religious principles serve as a foundation and mobilizing force, they are not all encompassing. The word crusade has been ignorantly thrown about in describing the conflict between Western governments and rogue international organizations. This naivety exhibits the underlying notion that the current conflict is a war against Islam, and not a war on international terrorist organizations. Furthermore, what it means to belong to a given religion is not clear. Various fundamentalist Christians and Muslims have constructed their own religious litmus tests to determine when one is religious enough.

The shift from self-evident universal religions embedded in given cultures, to religious communities surrounded by secularized societies is obvious in the approach to conversions. One is no longer a true member of a community simply by birth. One has to prove one's faith and commitment. The distinction between practicing and not practicing tends to deepen. The neofundamentalist writings are full of critiques of Muslims who behave like non-Muslims. Even if orthodox Islam and Catholicism state that everybody who is born as a believer remains a member of the community, individuals are increasingly asked about their credentials.¹³³

Al-Qaeda, which is an extreme minority in the Muslim world, implicitly asserts that those who do not sympathize with them or with whom they disagree politically are not Muslim

¹³³ Roy, Oliver, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 36-37.

enough. Thus, al-Qaeda does not even see this conflict purely in terms of religious affiliation because they have attacked other Muslims in predominantly Muslim countries with whom they disagree both religiously and politically. To frame the so-called war on terror in terms of religion is destructive and ignorant.

The most important “religious” factor influencing the al-Qaeda organization and a number of international terrorist organizations is jihad. Jihad is a vague term that has a variety of definitions, significations, and interpretations.

In the Koran... jihad is used in several different contexts. These include recognizing and loving the Creator; resisting the pressure of parents, peers, and society; staying on the straight path steadfastly; striving for religious deeds; having the courage and steadfastness to convey the message of Islam; defending Islam and the community; helping friends who may not be Muslim; removing treacherous rulers from power; defending all the above through preemptive strikes; winning the freedom to inform, educate and convey the message of Islam in an open and free environment, and thus freeing people from tyranny. In a military context jihad can have two roles, either offensive or defensive.¹³⁴

With so many possible interpretations of jihad it is no surprise that some have taken it to an extreme. With nearly 1/6th of the world’s population adhering to the traditions of Muhammed, it is clear and a relief that a majority of Muslims do not interpret jihad in the same way that al-Qaeda does. Osama bin-Laden believes that militant jihad is the obligation of all righteous Muslims;¹³⁵ this belief stems primarily from his desire to expulse the American military forces stationed in Saudi Arabia. Bin-Laden sees this as an invasion and believes that the entire Muslim community is living in sin, except for those fighting against the military presence, so long as the American forces are present in Saudi Arabia.¹³⁶ This belief in both offensive and defensive jihad is central to most of al-Qaeda’s religious and political ideology.

¹³⁴ Gunaratna, 113.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 116-117.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 117.

Inherent to this belief is the assumption of cultural and religious superiority; bin-Laden finds Americans so sordid that their mere presence defiles the legacy of Muhammed and Islamic society in general. This notion of cultural superiority and outright self-righteousness, no matter what the justification might be, exemplifies the civilizational conflict that Huntington describes, even though al-Qaeda only represents a small minority of the Islamic civilization. Without reason, or even the appeal to reason, al-Qaeda uses a very narrow interpretation of jihad to justify a variety of actions that have heretofore been considered immoral, and essentially debauch the same religious purity that they intend to protect. Islamic scholars have written thus: “As for those who cannot offer resistance or cannot fight, such as women, children, monks, old people, the blind, handicapped and their like, they shall not be killed, unless they actually fight with words and acts.”¹³⁷ This scholar is the same scholar whose interpretation of jihad bin-Laden exploited to justify his war against the West. Thus by even the most conservative standards, terrorism as a means to a narrow ideological end is not morally justifiable.

The expulsion of Westerners from the Islamic Holy land and the reestablishment of the umma, or community of believers, through offensive and defensive jihad is al-Qaeda’s political quest. Scholars have suggested that the only political ideology that bin-Laden has is Islam.¹³⁸ Meaning that bin-Laden’s political ambitions are to reassert and reestablish Islam and the directives of Muhammed. This is a fairly narrow depiction of bin-Laden as a figurehead. Bin-Laden has no religious training¹³⁹ and is not regarded as an Islamic scholar. He is characterized as being “as much an activist as an ideologue.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Ibid. 113.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 116.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 115.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 115.

Overall Al-Qaeda leaders have displayed a pragmatic willingness to adapt the strategic and tactical content of their statements to changing circumstances while retaining a messianic commitment to their broader ideological agenda. Although Bin Laden's self-professed goal is to "move, incite, and mobilize the [Islamic] nation" until it reaches a revolutionary "ignition point."¹⁴¹

It is evident that al-Qaeda is not simply a religious organization trying to enforce God's directives. The interpretations of Islam are so diverse that the reasonable Islamic scholar will recognize the pluralistic nature of Islam. To suggest that al-Qaeda has no political ambitions is to disregard the various inter-civilizational conflicts that al-Qaeda is waging. Al-Qaeda has sought regime change in a variety of predominantly Muslim countries, to influence American military policy, and to mobilize Muslims to stand up against their governments. Although al-Qaeda's goals might be cloaked in Islam, in reality their pursuits are political. A CRS report summarized the evolution of al-Qaeda's political ideology thus:

Following his declaration of jihad on the United States, Bin Laden released a series of statements that expanded the vision and scope of his self-declared conflict with the United States and specified his political prescriptions for the reformation of Islamic societies. Echoing US academic Samuel Huntington's theory on the impending clash of civilizations, Bin Laden repeated his characterization of so-called 'new crusade led by America against the Islamic nations,' and emphasized his belief that an emerging conflict between Islam and the West would be fought 'between the Islamic world and the Americans and their allies.' Bin Laden argued that the Islamic world should see itself as one seamless community, or umma, and that Muslims were obliged to unite and defend themselves. Turning his focus to the internal politics of the Islamic world, bin Laden urged Muslims to find a leader to unite them and establish a "pious caliphate" that would be governed by Islamic Law and follow Islamic principles of finance and social conduct. Bin Laden repeatedly argued Afghanistan had become a model Islamic state under his Taliban hosts and used religious rhetoric to solicit support for the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.¹⁴²

The politicization of Islam has prompted al-Qaeda to pursue an agenda that echoes Huntington's notion of civilizational clash. Al-Qaeda does not simply hope to dispel American military forces from the region, but rather to establish a broad Islamic civilization free from Western influence. The promotion of such ideologies has created a

¹⁴¹ Blanchard, Christopher M., "Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology," *CRS Report for Congress*, January 26, 2006, 14.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 3.

number of fault line conflicts within the Islamic civilization and has disrupted the broader global system. Huntington's prediction that the post-Cold War international system would be divided along the lines of civilization accurately depicts the current struggle between the West and international terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda. Although state relationships have still not reached this point, the growth in membership and influence of organizations like al-Qaeda will only make the clash of civilizations more likely.

Conclusion

The reality of international terrorist networks is exactly that – a reality. International terrorist networks do not exist in an alternative reality and these organizations act and are acted upon by the same contemporary forces that have changed global society in general. Many in the popular media and in the political realm, in their haste to score political points and stir up patriotic fervor, have underestimated the scope, sophistication, and capabilities of these rogue organizations. Only through an understanding of this reality will real solutions to the complex problems of international terrorism become possible.

In this paper I have shown that international terrorist organizations, especially al-Qaeda, have evolved in the same way that other international organizations have. The flat world forces have acted on al-Qaeda causing them to flatten organizationally, collaborate horizontally, and incorporate new technologies. I have further shown, that the same technological forces that have empowered multinational corporations and individuals the world over have also empowered international terrorist organizations. In essence, the same technology that allows Wal-Mart to manage a multinational supply chain also empowers al-Qaeda to manage an international terrorist network. I have also

described how al-Qaeda's ideology reflects contemporary international political theory. As Huntington asserts, the political ideology that al-Qaeda pursues is focused on the reassertion of an Islamic civilization, and the al-Qaeda membership identifies itself in terms of the civilizational other. Both the theories of Friedman and Huntington act to provide an appropriate context for the examination of the evolution of international terrorism.

Peter Bergen, noted al-Qaeda expert, suggests that "There's an interesting parallel...with bin Laden's organization, which is as much a creation of globalization as a response to it."¹⁴³ It is clear that the leadership, if not the general membership, of these organizations has a keen understanding of the international system; because they must have this sophisticated understanding in order to effectively disrupt it. This is one of the more important lessons that policy makers can learn from 9/11. Al-Qaeda did not simply orchestrate and execute an attack within the international system; they used the system as a weapon against itself. Al-Qaeda exploited the international financial system, the media, the transportation infrastructure, and even airport security regulations to execute their attack. Even the most ignorant of critics must acknowledge the degree of sophistication and understanding required to orchestrate such a horrific attack. The attacks of 9/11 show that al-Qaeda has been able to adapt quickly to a fast changing world. Although the weapons employed are often crude and unsophisticated, the organization itself is advanced enough to evade detection by the technologically, financially, and politically superior United States. It appears as though the new global system has not only affected those who willingly participate in it, but affects those who would otherwise dismantle it.

¹⁴³ Bergen, Peter L., *Holy War Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama Bin Laden*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 200.

Although many attempt to characterize terrorists as backwards, medieval, unsophisticated, and generally out of touch with the modern world; it is important to note that international terrorist organizations operate inside the same international system within which governments, international organizations, and multinational corporations operate. Globalization is one of the most contentious and complex political, cultural, social, and economic issues since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Academics have attempted to describe the nature, morality, and reasons for this rapid global integration. In fact, globalization is infinitely faceted and affects nearly every aspect of life in the modern world. On the surface, in broad terms, some might suggest that the theories of Friedman and Huntington describe globalization from very disparate perspectives. Through this paper, however, I have demonstrated that, in the realm of international terrorist organizations, both Friedman and Huntington are right. The extent to which we understand the forces of globalization is the extent to which we understand the evolutions of international terrorist organizations. Terrorism expert Evan Kohlmann suggests that “No matter what the focus of today’s counterterrorism operatives, Washington must ensure that they are familiar with both foreign cultures and how terrorists operate online. Technological sophistication is no longer a luxury. It is now a basic survival skill.”¹⁴⁴ In other words, we must know our enemy, know ourselves, and know the terrain.

¹⁴⁴ Kohlmann, 124.

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