READING ANONYMITY:
NARRATIVE DIFFERENCE AND FRAMEWORK SELECTION IN THE CLAIMING
OF TERRORIST VIOLENCE

by

VICTORIA DAVIS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
M.PHIL IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

SEPTEMBER 2011
1. Candidate's declarations:

I, Victoria Paige Davis hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 39,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in [September 2010] and as a candidate for the degree of M.Phil in [February 2011]; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between [2010] and [2011].

Date March 27, 2012 

signature of candidate ________________________

2. Supervisor's declaration:

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of M.Phil in International Relations in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date __________________ signature of supervisor ________________________

3. Permission for electronic publication: (to be signed by both candidate and supervisor)

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, that my thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use unless exempt by award of an embargo as requested below, and that the library has the right to migrate my thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis. I have obtained any third-party copyright permissions that may be required in order to allow such access and migration, or have requested the appropriate embargo below.

The following is an agreed request by candidate and supervisor regarding the electronic publication of this thesis:

Add one of the following options:

(iii) Embargo on both [all or part] of printed copy and electronic copy for the same fixed period of 2 years (maximum five) from the date that the thesis is lodged in the University Library on the following ground(s): publication would preclude future publication.

Date March 27, 2012 signature of candidate ________________________

signature of supervisor ________________________

A supporting statement for a request for an embargo must be included with the submission of the draft copy of the thesis. Where part of a thesis is to be embargoed, please specify the part and the reasons.

Supporting Statement
Request for Embargo on all of printed copy and electronic copy for 2 years

I would like to petition for an embargo on the entirety of both the printed and electronic copies of the MPhil thesis for a two year period, given that within this timeframe I intend to submit for publication articles based upon the research contained therein. While it is true that material submitted to peer-reviewed journals, once it undergoes revision and reformatting, is often very different from the original text, extensive content from the thesis is likely to feature in said scholarship. The two-year embargo will provide ample opportunity to revise and publish the desired material while precluding potential conflicts over publication.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract 4

I. Introduction 5
   A. History of Anonymity in Terrorism 5
   B. Statement of Purpose 6
   C. Value of Research 7

II. Review of Scholarship 9
   A. Communicative Nature of Terrorism 9
   B. Contextualizing the Terrorist Message 10
   C. Current Explanations for Unclaimed Attacks 12
   D. Another Look at Credit Claiming 23

III. Research Query and Methods 25
   A. Query 25
   B. Case Study Design and Selection 26
   C. Methodology: Justification of the Discourse Analytic Approach 31
   D. Methodology: Method of Discourse Analysis 35
   E. Data Sources 37

IV. Constructivism as a Theoretical Approach 42

V. Case Study Narratives 46
   A. A Brief Introduction to Anonymity 46
   B. Introduction to Case Studies 47
   C. Case Study: 1998 US Embassy Bombings 50
   D. Case Study: 2008 Danish Embassy Bombing 64
   E. Case Study: 2000 USS Cole Bombing 70
   F. Case Study: 2000 Aqaba Rocket Bombings 80
   G. Case Study: 2004 Madrid Train Bombings 85
   H. Case Study: 2005 London Train Bombings 95

VI. Summary of Narrative Trends Across Case Studies 107
   A. Civilization vs. Barbarism 107
   B. Attacked vs. Attacker: The Exoneration of Suspects 113
C. Attacked vs. Attacker: The State and State Foil 118
D. Inability to Demarcate Relevant Information 124
E. Possibility of future attack as legitimizing state action 128

VII. Analysis 134
A. Risk and the Notion of Risk Society 134
B. Why Risk is Not an Appropriate Framework for the Terrorist Attack 135
C. The Distinction between Uncertainty and Ambiguity 136
D. Claimed/Unclaimed Terrorist Attacks as Framed under Uncertainty, Ambiguity 138
E. Ambiguity as Applied to Claim Scholarship 143

VIII. Importance of Findings and Suggestions for Future Research 148
References 149
News Reference Key 162
Appendices 298
ABSTRACT

While a significant proportion of terrorist attacks have always gone unclaimed scholarship has noted an increasing number of such acts over the past half-century, which appears to indicate that the claiming of violence may no longer constitute an essential terrorist strategy. The increasing gap between claimed and unclaimed attacks (where “unclaimed” is understood as a terrorist attack for which no credible assertion is issued by the perpetrating individual or group) cannot be explained by existing assumptions, which posit that terrorist groups will seek to advertise their success. This thesis attempts to develop a more complete understanding of this phenomenon by examining al Qaeda’s claim variation within a series of paired case studies to explore the presumption of narrative difference between the two types of attacks. Findings indicate that claimed acts of terrorism tend to be presented via a framework of uncertainty whereas unclaimed acts are presented within a framework of ambiguity. The distinction of ambiguous frameworks is that they allow the terrorist to operate in a newly created narrative space to perpetuate and expand the fear-provoking effects of violence by destabilizing mutually exclusive identities of blame and rendering attacker and victim indistinct, while at the same time confirming the imminent possibility of lethal harm. The variation between models has significant implications for policymakers given that the choice of framework limits or guides one towards particularized courses of action. Given the creative authority of the targeted society as definer of this framework, it remains within the attacked population’s power to eliminate the narrative advantage allotted terrorist actors under conditions of ambiguity.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A. History of Anonymity in Terrorism

While a significant proportion of terrorist attacks have always gone unclaimed (see Cordes et al. 1985; Pluchinsky 1997), scholarship has noted an increasing number of unclaimed acts of terrorism over the past half-century (Gearson 2002; B. Hoffman 1996, 1997, 1999, 2006; Rorie 2008) that appears to indicate that the claiming of violence may no longer be an essential terrorist strategy. An average of 60% of terrorist attacks from 1970 to 1979 were claimed; this proportion dropped to 39% between 1980 and 1982 (Cordes et al., 1985, p.23), and has further declined in subsequent decades. LaFree and Dugan (2008) note the percentage of claimed attacks between the late 1990s and 2004 fell to 14.5% (p.28-9). In a study of terrorist claim staking between 1970 and 1997, Rorie (2008) finds evidence of a definitive shift towards anonymity over time with 1982 as the median of claimed attacks and 1993 as the median of unclaimed attacks (p.38). Contrary to conventional wisdom regarding the presumed publicity ambitions of terrorist organizations, there has been a similar drop in the claiming of the “terrorist spectacular” (B. Hoffman 1997). This is particularly unusual given that previous examinations of unclaimed attacks have found the majority of such incidents to be low-level actions that are not intended to cause casualties (Cordes et al., 1985, p.15).

The increasing gap between claimed and unclaimed attacks cannot be explained by existing assumptions, which posit that terrorist groups will seek to advertise their success so as to establish themselves as a threat, call attention to their cause, and generate support amongst sympathetic populations (Crenshaw 1995; A.M. Hoffman 2010; Knutson 1980; LaFree & Dugan...
Explanations involving the advent of new technologies—such as remote time bombs that eliminated the “personal heroism” required by the anarchist bomb thrower of the 19th century and allowed for a less discriminating and more anonymous attack (Wardlaw, 1989, p.31)—also cannot explain the variation in claiming behavior between the late 1970s, 1980s and subsequent decades, given that such technologies existed throughout the aforementioned period. The decline in claiming tendency has persisted despite the fact that, due to the supposedly poor communicative properties of violence (Cordes et al. 1985; Johnston 1995; Sper 1995), anonymity and lack of context have been found to generate confusion with regard to actor, motive, and message content that undermines the terrorist’s ability to gain support/understanding and elicit policy concessions from governments (A.M. Hoffman 2010). Furthermore, this tendency towards anonymity has increased in spite of the knowledge that the absence of media coverage (and the publicity it brings) is repeatedly cited as a factor in the decline of terrorist groups (Cordes et al. 1985; DeGhetto 1994; Horowitz 1983; Lockett 1995) and that the media is more likely to report on attacks in which responsibility has been established (Bockstette, 2008, p.19; Weimann & Winn 1993). This behavior is particularly puzzling in the case of large-scale or high-profile attacks, as current logic dictates that such an event requires a higher level of planning, expertise, and execution from which a successful terrorist group would benefit in terms of audience outreach through greater media coverage.

**B. Statement of Purpose**

This thesis seeks to develop a more complete understanding of terrorists’ decision-making strategies in relation to the planning and execution of acts of violence by examining the variation in credit taking behavior of a single terrorist organization and developing an account of the
fluctuating relationship between terrorists’ conflicting desire for publicity and anonymity. Specifically, discourse analysis situated within a constructivist framework will be used to explore paired claimed/unclaimed acts of terrorism to investigate the presumed difference in terrorist identity narratives attached to both types of attacks and determine whether claim status is correlated with certain actor characterizations that may attest to the increase in unclaimed attacks.

It should be noted that the use of a case study approach in the instance of a singular organization, though providing valuable insight from the perspective of “building-block” theory development, does caution against the overgeneralization of findings to all unclaimed terrorist acts. Furthermore, the study does not profess to evaluate the effect of claim status on actors outside of the perpetrating terrorist organization and the target audience/government, such as sympathetic constituencies or rival terrorist groups. It is hoped that the foundational research conducted by this study will assist with the future development of a broader theoretical model for unclaimed terrorist attacks, particularly those that are religiously motivated.

C. Value of Research

Claims of responsibility provide a more complete understanding of the terrorists’ decision-making and planning strategy, as well as insight into variations between terrorist groups (Rapoport 1997). According to A.M. Hoffman (2010), credit taking has the potential to reveal a great deal about the nature of the threat groups pose, their ultimate aims, the incentives affecting

---

1 “Unclaimed” is understood to mean a terrorist attack for which no credible, formal claim of responsibility has been issued by the author(s). Consequently, it does not imply an absolute lack of claims issued, simply that the validity of said claims has been discounted by authorities.
their behavior, and the adequacy of government and audience response to their attacks. For instance, Enders and Sandler (2006) suggest that anonymous attacks presume groups are disinterested in establishing grassroots support and do not place value in the possibility of future compromise, whereas claimed attacks are viewed as signaling a lack of fear of government counter-terrorism efforts (as cited in B. Hoffman 1997). According to Clarke and Newman (2006), choice-structuring properties not only provide information regarding the incident but also testify to the criminal offender (e.g. his/her needs, preferences, personal characteristics, and perceptions); understanding how acts of violence are driven and exploited by terrorist motivations will enable law enforcement to manipulate situations to increase risk and difficulty of execution while minimizing rewards (as cited in Rorie 2008). The proposed comparative format allows for the empirical identification and investigation of circumstances under which a group will seek to formally claim their attacks as well as variation in the reception and interpretation of such acts by the target government and mass public, information that may prove valuable towards future predictive models of terrorist behavior.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

A. The Communicative Nature of Terrorism

There is a dispute in both the academic and political world over who or what qualifies as worthy of the label “terrorism”; however, one of the most common elements of these varied depictions is the phenomenon’s communicative nature. Terrorism is conceptualized most broadly as a public act intended to coerce an audience (A.M. Hoffman 2010; Horgan, 2004, p.31; Weinberg et al. 2004). Scholarship has documented various aspects of this communicative function, including its manipulative power over audience perception (Schmid & Jongman, 1988, p.28), dependence upon context reading (Crelinsten 1989a), and its claim for attention and legitimacy (Crelinsten 1989b). According to Louise Richardson, “the point of terrorism is to communicate a message. It is not violence for the sake of it, or even violence in the expectation of defeating the enemy; rather it is violence to convey a political message” (2006, p.21). It is in fact this characteristic, the tendency to seek maximum attention and exposure as well as the necessity of justifying the violence in terms of social values, political or religious meaning, that distinguishes terrorism in the amorphous world of violent crime (Crenshaw, 1995, p.15; LaFree & Dugan, 2004, p.59; Staun, 2009, p.11).

Based upon terrorism’s communicative tendencies, acquiring and maintaining publicity is essential to terrorist legitimacy, garnering attention and fear-inspiring potential (Nacos 2002; Picard 1993; Wardlaw 1989), securing a favorable understanding of the terrorist cause (Perl 1997), recruitment and support (A.M. Hoffman 2010; Waugh Jr., 1983, p.7) and justifying the use of terror in societies where alternative means of redress are ever more accessible (Apter,
1997, p.2,5; Cordes, 1987, p.2; Rapoport, 2004, p.1502). The absence of media coverage has been cited as a factor in the downfall of terrorism (see Cordes et al., 1985, p.17; DeGhetto, 1994, p.17); as Lockett (1995) notes, “[a]n ignored terrorist group does not influence” (p.20). Failure to attract media attention may stem from the group’s failure to provide the extraordinary (Horowitz 1983; Knutson, 1980, p.206) or from credit claiming; Weimann and Winn (1993) find that the media is more likely to report on attacks in which responsibility has been established (see Bockstette, 2008, p.19; Rorie, 2008, p.8). However, the consequences of a poorly communicated message may outweigh even a lost media opportunity. Instances in which the audience fails to interpret or attributes an incorrect interpretation to an act of violence may result in the loss of popular sympathy as well as group legitimacy, decreasing the pool of potential recruits and available resources and posing a threat to organizational sustainability. This is especially true when the public perceives the victims of terrorist attacks to be entirely random (Ross & Gurr, 1989; USIP, 1999, p.4).

B. Contextualizing the Terrorist Message

In order to engender psychological effects that will translate into political gains for the terrorist group, the audience who receives the terrorist message must “know or have a good idea who is responsible for the act, and (...) must understand the message, that is, why the terrorists attacked that target” (Cordes et al., 1985, p.15). Yet on their own, acts of violence appear to be a poor means of expression that often require clarification through other means. Decker and Rainey (1980) argue that terrorism has become a “carefully designed and rhetorically sophisticated attempt at communication” (p.3). However Cordes (1987) appears less optimistic at the transmitting potential of violence, judging it to be a crude method of communication capable of
sending only as complicated a message as “be afraid.” Sper (1995) concurs that “one cannot assume a terrorist group’s intent by its actions alone” (p.17). Without a clarifying discursive element, the terrorist act is left to speak for itself—a feat which it appears ill-equipped to accomplish.

According to Cordes et al. (1985), the principal method by which terrorists attempt to influence the behavior of their target audience is via the claiming of an act of terrorism (p.15). Claims add additional information to attacks (Wright, 2009, p.6) and are helpful in providing insights into the mindset of those who view violence as an effective and justified instrument in pursuing their aims (Kellen, 1982, p.2). Claims of responsibility reflect the plans upon which terrorist groups rely in ways that warnings cannot, given the control the terrorist exercises over their timing and content; claims are not filtered through governing authorities who possess editing potential (A.M. Hoffman, 2010, p.6).

Claiming responsibility for an attack is further attractive to terrorist groups because of the difficulty of credibly claiming acts committed by others given temporal proximity (A.M. Hoffman, 2010, p.7). As many groups have a vested interest in similar targets and tactical innovations can be copied (Fleming et al. 1988; B. Hoffman, 2006, p.148; Jenkins, 1981, p.6; Nacos 2009), credit taking allows groups to distinguish themselves from other publicity seekers and reap the presumed benefits thereof. Furthermore, given the constraints under which terrorist organizations function, credit claiming is an inexpensive and comparably simple method of projecting influence whereas alternative methods—such as attack signatures or specially
designed bombs—require highly trained operatives that are both difficult to recruit and exceedingly hard to retain and or replace (A.M. Hoffman, 2010, p.6).

C. Current Explanations for Unclaimed Attacks

Given the perceived benefits—even necessity—of claiming an attack, what circumstances would deter a terrorist group from making such a claim? The following paragraphs review the limited yet contested scholarship addressing explanations of such groups’ propensity to anonymously commit acts of violence.

The New Religious Character of Terrorism

In comparison to previous secular ethno-separatist or left-wing terrorist groups, the religious character of the “new terrorism” does not necessitate the justification of violence to an earthly audience. With regard to political ideology, Rapoport (1997) argues that groups driven by ideologies championing material goals and the notion of mass support (e.g. Marxism or nationalism) are more likely to take credit, as it serves to generate popular support for the movement. In turn, Crenshaw’s (1996) research on terrorist renunciation of violence counters that ideologies stressing mass involvement (e.g. communism or socialism) may reject terrorism on principle due to its “elite” character (p.252).

Likewise, terrorists adhering to religious and millenarian beliefs are less likely to claim credit as they lack a real-world constituency to whom they can be held accountable (Enders & Sandler, 2000, p.311; Post, 2005, p.461; Rapoport 1984, 1997). Post (2007) asserts that none of the rules developed for “ordinary” terrorists apply to religiously motivated groups as they “are not
constrained by their audience on earth” (p.240); rather, they place service to God over political ambitions (Ranstorp 1996) and thus have no need of justifying the commitment of violence in service of an approving omniscient deity (Post, 2005, p.452; Rapoport 1984; Wright, 2009, p.18).

However, this sharp dichotomy between “religious” and “political” terrorism—and indeed between all general categories of non-state terrorist groups—as discrete and mutually exclusive is untenable. Neumann (2009) asserts that “if the objective is to change or transform societies by introducing aspects of religious law, creating a theocracy or even a caliphate (…) the political nature of the terrorist campaign can no longer be in doubt” (p.95). As with other politically motivated terrorist organizations, regardless of the grounds for their impetus, “[terrorists’] political programmes are violent expressions of ideological currents which are located on the radical fringes of mainstream society. In other words, they reflect broader political and/or social trends” (Neumann, 2009, p.95). This notion was confirmed by B. Hoffman (2006) in his observation of the preeminence of the ethno-nationalist and/or irredentist aims over religious motives in groups such as the PLO, the IRA, and the FLN (p.82)

This blurring of boundaries is further documented in that essentially “religious” terrorist groups, such as Hamas or Palestine’s al-Jihad al-Islam, have displayed nationalist sentiments. Groups such as al Qaeda express a consistent ideological agenda targeting the expulsion of foreign forces and influences from Islamic nations and the creation of an Islamic caliphate ruled by sharia law, but the foundation of their rhetoric (which has remained constant over the past decade) is that Muslims, considering themselves as a single nation, should unite to resist anti-Islamic aggression
based upon the principle of defensive jihad (Blanchard, 2005, p.6). This may necessitate joining al Qaeda and likeminded organizations in opposing those attempting to construct secular democratic governments or seeking to prop up existing regimes deemed non-Islamic (Blanchard, 2005, p.8)—a task that requires recruiting from sympathetic populations in much the same manner as any politically-oriented group. One may well argue that this goal (though perhaps grounded on religious principles) is clearly political in its objective, the pursuit of which requires public support in the same manner as a secular campaign.

*Media Coverage and the Establishment of Legitimacy*

Media attention does not automatically confer legitimacy, and the risk of inaccurately communicating the terrorist message may provide an advantage to policymakers and depress the terrorists’ desire to claim responsibility. Risk of erroneous communications or interpretations by the media may lead to a loss of support for the terrorist group (Abrahms 2006). Due to the event-oriented and for-profit nature of the media (Rorie, 2008, p.10), publicity of a terrorist act may cover tactics used and their fallout but is unlikely to review the conditions that precipitated the attack (Altheide 1987). As Rapoport (1997) notes, “legitimizing terror is a difficult, usually impossible, always problematic task (...) to those who think justification is possible, very special circumstances are required: no alternatives, a desperate and/or exceedingly propitious situation, monstrous enemies unwilling to recognize limits who by their actions have made the terrorist in fact the true victim” (p.12). Unlike legislators—who possess large media relations departments—terrorist-media relations are furtive and provide less opportunity to refine communications (Altheide 1987; Clarke & Newman 2006; Rorie, 2008, p.10). Likewise, the limited nature of terrorist media coverage allows policymakers to detract attention from the
underlying issues and focus on punishing the perpetrators (Chermak & Gruenewald 2006; Picard 1993).

However, this argument does not take into account that terrorists are capable of, and often engage in, clarifying interpretations of violent acts; in fact both small and large organizations conduct a wide variety of formal press relations activities (Picard 1989). Note the videotapes publicized by Osama bin Laden, a more recent example of which attempted to direct audiences to the proper sources of interpretation and “clarify the ‘message’” of the September 11th terrorist attack (VOA 2009). Furthermore, terrorist organizations often have significant media resources at their disposal, possibly through a political arm\(^2\) that has full access to legitimate media sources and is capable of marshaling its own resources. Indeed, the asymmetry of media coverage in the terrorists’ favor (Bockstette 2008) has led policymakers to express concern at such groups’ ability to manipulate the media in the way they desire (see Isbell et al. 2006). The use of the Internet as a means of communication is also considered central to terrorist communications (Talbot 2005, p.48), and offers a broad publicity tool that is free of the media’s interpretive constraints. There have furthermore been instances in which terrorists were granted media opportunities to freely air their grievances; recall, for instance, the 1-hour uninterrupted interview of Osama bin Laden by CNN’s Peter Arnett in 1997, wherein the Saudi exile was free to expound on these underlying “causalities.”

\(^2\) e.g. Sinn Fein and the IRA (see Horgan 2004).
The Interpretive Power of Audience

One argument against the utility of claiming is that it is unnecessary; the message will reach the intended audience in any case (e.g. B. Hoffman, 1997, p.4). As Gearson (2002) suggests, “[t]he need to claim ‘credit’ for an attack is not as important if, in the minds of the terrorists, the act speaks for itself” (p.11). Following the September 11th attacks, for instance, even Osama bin Laden trumpeted “[t]hose young men [inaudible] said in deeds, in New York and Washington, speeches that overshadowed all other speeches made everywhere else in the world. The speeches are understood by both Arabs and non-Arabs—even by Chinese” (USDOD 2001). Yet a quick survey of notable terrorist incidents contests this assumption. In the case of Pan Am Flight 103—unaccounted for until Libya’s 2003 admission of responsibility—investigators in the immediate wake of the attack were unable to pinpoint either perpetrator or grievance (USCIA 1988), leaving press and public alike speculating as to message and motive. As previously noted, this also occurred in the case of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombings, which provided no contextual clues pointing to Timothy McVeigh’s anger at the federal government and the handling of the 1993 Waco Siege and the Ruby Red incident. This confusion was further compounded by various expert misattributions that the bombing was the product of Islamist militarism. Furthermore, as described in the previous literature on credit claiming (e.g. Wright 2009), common attack techniques (e.g. bombings) are not easily distinguished from one another, requiring groups to differentiate themselves via credit claiming or expensive signature attacks. As the organizations with the resources to continuously fund such signature attacks are arguably outweighed by those who must rely upon more resource-conserving methods, no such distinguishing element of violence can be expected.
**The Embarrassment of Failure**

An argument put forth by Pluchinsky (1997) in the case of the failed terrorist attempt is that organizations may be too embarrassed to claim credit; terrorism is not for amateurs, and the benefits of being viewed as such by potential supporting communities and sponsors may be detrimental to the terrorist’s resource pool. Yet events over the past decade have demonstrated otherwise—such organizations appear to find utility in associating themselves even with failed plots, which calls into question whether it is the quantity or quality of media coverage that is most important. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula claimed responsibility for a failed mail bomb plot on American cargo planes in November 2010 as well as failed attempts to shoot down the Saudi royal family’s plane in October 2010 and assassinate the nation’s Anti-Terrorism Campaign head in August of the previous year. The Pakistani Taliban claimed ownership of a failed September 2008 bombing of Barcelona trains and more recently the attempted May 2010 attempted car bomb in New York City’s Times Square. Even al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden claimed the failed 2009 Christmas Day Flight 253 bombing plot. Nor is this phenomenon limited to Islamist terrorist organizations; Continuity IRA claimed multiple failed attacks on police bases in April 2000 and June 2009, while the Real IRA accepted responsibility for a 2002 attempted police car bombing and 2004 bomb attempt in Derry. Thus, groups appear to derive some benefit from associating their names even with failed acts of violence; rather than hiding their involvement, many go out of their way to advertise it.

**Fear of Retaliation by Authorities**

This line of argument maintains that claiming exposes terrorist organizations to counter-terrorism measures (B. Hoffman 1996, 1997; Rapoport 1997) by providing governments with
otherwise unavailable materials for destroying terrorists. According to Rapoport (1996), publicity “helps an outraged public to mobilize its vast resources and produces information that the public needs to pierce the veil of secrecy all terrorist groups require” (p.viii).

However, scholarship has noted that high-profile methods such as hijackings, kidnappings, barricade-and-hostage events, and suicide attacks are claimed nearly all of the time—whether due to the possible link between, for instance, suicide and cultures of martyrdom (Hafez 2006, cited in A.M. Hoffman 2010) or due to the fact that high-profile methods often require the perpetrator to identify him/herself (Cordes et al., 1985, p.25)—whereas low-profile methods such as hit-and-run attacks are the least likely to be claimed. Assumption of responsibility for terrorist acts and exposure to government recrimination neither necessarily signals the end of an organization nor poses a significant hindrance to the ability to launch attacks. For instance, groups such as ETA, the IRA, and FARC were targets of government counter-terrorism efforts for significant lengths of time yet continued to conduct operations that impacted the target audience. Furthermore, heightened environmental pressure or governmental retaliatory measures often serve as predictors of increased internal cohesion (Bjorgo, 2009, p.34) by suppressing internal group conflict (Crenshaw 1992) while justifying and reaffirming the terrorist organization’s views (Post 1987). As Sper (1995) notes, “creating a common enemy (…) draws group members together and increases group cohesion by increasing the salience of intra group bonds and core values as a source of security (p.72). Post (1987) does indicate, however, that retaliatory measures may have some effect on state-sponsored violence, as the survival of the state and furtherance of national goals are paramount; in instances where terrorist activity
threatens those goals it can be reduced or abandoned, as the state does not require violence to justify its existence (p.488).

Scholars have noted that attacks on the public at large may pressure governments to increase counter-terrorism measures, which may diminish the utility of claiming authorship of an attack (Gearson 2002; B. Hoffman 1996, 1997; Rapoport 1997). Yet conflicting literature cites that the general populace is less likely to be seen as a “legitimate” target and thus such an attack will result in greater backlash and compel the perpetrating group to publicly justify their target selection (B. Hoffman 1999; Picard 1993; Ross & Gurr 1989), which inevitably requires assumption of responsibility. Rorie’s (2008) study on terrorist target selection finds that an attack on a specific target, as opposed to the general public, does not decrease the likelihood that it will be claimed.

In turn, the literature offers a relatively uniform prediction that state sponsorship of terrorism reduces the probability of credit taking as governments generally find little utility in associating themselves with perceived illegitimate actors (Cordes et al. 1985; Pluchinsky 1997; Post 1987). Yet the effect of state retaliation in response to an act of terrorism remains indeterminate. B. Hoffman (1997) argues that terrorists prefer not to shoulder blame when governments retaliate indiscriminately—yet the direction of public anger in such instances may not target the terrorist organization at all but rather the offending government. Public resentment may delegitimize the government and lead to greater constituent support for the terrorist group (Frey 2004) as well as increased internal cohesion and a rise in the organization’s terrorist activity (Post 1987). Bueno de Mesquita (2005) identifies a U-curve with respect to government action; infrequent military
responses allow terrorists to claim credit with little fear of retaliation, whereas frequent counterstrikes allow groups to capitalize on public outrage.

Even given the premise that claim making provides otherwise unknown information to authorities, one must consider that terrorist groups may be functioning on organizational rather than individual rationality; acts of violence, though possibly unrelated to the group’s professed agenda, are therefore critical to its identity and legitimacy and may cause the group to continue such activities despite additional risks (Crenshaw 2001; DeGhetto 1994; Post 1987; Sper 1995; Waugh Jr. 1983). In such instances, the compulsion of organizational maintenance may diminish the cost of harsher counter-terrorism penalties given the comparative need to provide a source of validation and purpose for group members.

Public Relations Maintenance

A further argument in favor of anonymous attacks asserts that in cases where the action either conflicts with the established group image or produces casualties over the acceptable level, groups tend not to stake claims (DeGhetto, 1994, p.10; Pluchinsky, 1997, p.7). However, this does not explain the general declining tendency among organizations to claim attacks; to allow for this argument, one must make the case that terrorist attacks have become bloodier across the spectrum, suppressing the claiming tendency. Yet if the level of violence spiked across the entire gambit of terrorist organizations over the past few decades (and it would have to have done so, in order to exhibit an overall decline in claim making), one can also assume that societies exposed to such violence for a protracted period adjusted their accepted level of violence accordingly, rendering such terrorism routine and mundane (Horowitz 1983).
Additionally, empirical studies indicate that the idea terrorists will damage their image by killing is not supported by hard evidence. In a study of public attitudes towards terrorism in Uruguay, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Northern Ireland, Hewitt (1990) observes that it is rather those groups that kill the most (e.g. ETA and the IRA) that have the most positive ratings, while groups who have killed far fewer (e.g. the Baader-Meinhof gang and the Red Brigades) have the most unfavorable image. (p.142-3). The study finds that attitudes towards political violence depend primarily upon structural-historical elements, and are therefore “little affected by either terrorist actions or by government policies”; moreover, “those (...) who assume that terrorist sympathizers will be alienated by atrocities are equally deluded” (p.155).

**Greater Fear-Inciting Potential**

This strand of scholarship cites that terrorists maximize the element of surprise which—combined with the random targeting of victims—evokes higher levels of public anxiety (Garrison 2003; Gearson 2002; B. Hoffman 1997, 2006; Perl 1997; Wardlaw 1989) and presumably makes a greater contribution towards the furthering of the terrorist agenda. As an aside to her investigation of domestic terrorist targets, Rorie (2008) notes that in a comparison of claimed/unclaimed violence in newspaper reports, the media focused on the *pervasiveness* of public fear in the instance of anonymous terrorist acts. In the case of the former, the public was not as generally apprehensive but instead channeled their fear towards *specific* locations while expressing contempt for those responsible (p.52-3). According to Wardlaw (1989), if a victim of terrorism cannot understand the source of danger it is likely s/he will turn to a leader who appears to be knowledgeable and competent; if the incumbent forces prove unable to provide this interpretive framework and guarantee personal security, the fear and panic inspired by an attack
may be heightened (p.34-5). Cordes et al. (1985) observes that in the context of major terrorist unclaimed events the offender’s anonymity “enhances the confusion and tension surrounding the attack. Speculation abounds and theories of attribution are batted back and forth” (p.15), as was borne out in the previously mentioned 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and Pan Am Flight 103.

Yet there are problematic elements within this theory as well. According to Cordes et al. (1985), a number of unclaimed attacks achieve greater publicity than they would have had they been claimed due to public fear of a repeat performance by a mysterious and seemingly more effective unidentified perpetrator (p.15). Yet this finding conflicts with that of Weimann and Winn (1993), who note that the main benefit—increased publicity—of formally claiming responsibility for a terrorist attack derives from the fact that the media is more likely to report on attacks in which responsibility is known. Even if one assumes that anonymous terrorist acts are more adept at inciting fear, if the phenomenon’s primary purpose is to communicate or further a particular agenda (rather than mindless fear mongering), given the assumed limited communicative nature of violence it would appear that not claiming an attack may be counterproductive to the terrorist agenda.

Impact of Environmental Characteristics

Environmental characteristics, such as geographic/cultural factors or competition between terrorist groups, may suppress claiming behavior. Assumption of responsibility may vary according to competition for supporters and resources; A.M. Hoffman (2010) finds that credit taking is dependent upon the number of active terrorist groups in a given theater of operations. Given relatively low competition an organization may not have incentive to claim attacks,
whereas in areas of high competition it will choose to advertise its accomplishments to supporters and potential recruits. A.M. Hoffman’s study, however, limits itself to a single country (Israel); Wright’s (2009) multi-country analysis finds little support for this conclusion.

Wright instead explains claim variation based upon cultural discrepancy in the utility of claiming as a signaling mechanism. Yet Cordes et al. (1985) find no correlation between the geographic theater of the attack and its claim status; neither is any explanatory power inherent to the nationality of the target itself (p.25). Furthermore, in cases where those responsible are eventually discovered, unclaimed attacks have not demonstrated a statistical proclivity to be the product of any particular ethnic or religious group.

D. Another Look at Credit Claiming

Existing claim making literature tends to assume the poor communicative ability of acts of violence, yet anonymity is often cited as one of the primary strengths of violent non-state actors (see Kiras, 2009, p.189; Mulaj, 2010, p.19). It is unlikely, given the frequency of the strategy’s use and the agenda-driven nature of terrorism, that an organization would repeatedly select an attack style bereft of communicative potential or utility. A significant oversight (given its presumed theoretical importance) throughout the existing literature is the untested presumption of qualitative difference and causal linkage between the claimed/unclaimed status of an attack and its impact on an audience. There is a broad assumption that unclaimed attacks, lacking the context provided by association with a named group or cause, cannot effectively communicate a political message or that terrorists must choose between inspiring fear and avoiding government retaliation and conveying a message to constituencies and potential recruits.
Scholarship generally refers to formal claims of responsibility only in passing, focusing instead on the propensity of terrorist groups to issue warnings prior to or manifestoes following an act of violence; indeed, compilations of these communiqués are not uncommon\(^3\). Instances where publicity is not sought by an organization are generally not discussed in relation to the terrorist decision-making strategy\(^4\), and where present are couched within a review of other circumstantial factors (e.g. Pape 2003 and suicide terrorism)\(^5\). Within this literature, failure to take credit for a violent act tends to be based upon theoretical supposition\(^6\). Those few studies that do empirically analyze claim making are furthermore often applicable only as it relates to a particularized case or country of study (e.g. A.M. Hoffman 2010, Rorie 2008), and there appears yet to have been an examination of a single terrorist organization’s claiming patterns, which might provide insight into the circumstantial factors that influence claim making. A satisfactory explanation of unclaimed attacks, their communicative potential, and their place as a strategic tool for terrorist organizations to connect with their audience has yet to be offered.

---

\(^4\) Exceptions include B. Hoffman 1997, Pluchinsky 1997
\(^5\) As noted by Rorie, 2008, p.17
\(^6\) Exceptions include Rorie 2008, Wright 2009
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUERY AND METHODS

A. Query

Identity, as it is socially constructed by humans, is relational (in that the understanding of oneself is predicated on the creation of another grouping of characteristics of which one is not a part and the inclusiveness of each group is affected by social interaction) and cognitively processed based upon habit or prior experience (e.g. humans categorize experiences under a limited number of models that can be readily applied to new situations in order to organize and understand stimuli). It stands to reason that a society’s relationship with terrorism and its proponents consists of a cyclical application and re-definition/application of such frames based upon an amalgam of past and present experience. Consequently, the nature of terrorist actors should function as a research question rather than an assumption; not all terrorists may be “created equal” in the mind of the public (Klotz & Lynch 2007). The British public’s post-ceasefire understanding of and relationship with the IRA, for instance, may differ widely from their understanding of the same group during The Troubles or their comparative conceptualization of al Qaeda following the 2005 London bombings.

This research seeks to explore the presumed difference in meaning attached to claimed/unclaimed acts of terror by examining the identity of a single terrorist group under both conditions so as to determine whether claim status is correlated with certain characterizations of the terrorist actor that may assist in explaining the increasing prevalence of unclaimed attacks.
The thesis addresses the following questions:

- Do claimed/unclaimed acts of terrorism differ in their depictions of the terrorist actor with regard to intrinsic characteristics, ascribed motivation, attack brutality, or the breadth of power attributed to the perpetrators? How is this understanding conveyed to the audience?

- Who is the “we” functioning as the counter to the terrorist “other,” and how are certain understandings of both actors encouraged or limited by the discourse? How does the emphasis or omission of certain aspects regarding the terrorist group affect the resulting identities?

- How does the resulting discourse affect the meaning attached to the event and the resulting significance of the perpetrators as defined by the target audience?

- How does the understanding of al Qaeda’s identity as well as that of the “other” fluctuate over time given continued attacks? How does this speak to the evolving relationship between a terrorist group and society?

### B. Case Study Design and Selection

The use of the comparative case study format is appropriate for multiple reasons; first, the theoretical understanding of identity used here is predicated on the intersubjective, structural, social identity proposed by Hopf (2009). This necessitates the assumption that identities operate independently of whomever occupies the position of head of state—continuity in identity relations across governments—and excludes approaches rooted in the presence or absence of any
one leader or administration (Hopf, 2009, p.286). The comparative structure permits examination of the phenomenon of interest within its original context, yet the inclusion of several case studies as part of a single investigation provides a body of alternative explanations, preventing the frequent interpretivist trap of defining terms in such a specific manner that parallels to other situations are unfeasible (Lin 1998).

It is understood among social scientists that the ideal conditions for paired comparisons rarely exist, and that the distinction between cases and non-cases may not be well defined (Klotz & Prakash, 2009, p.46). Certainly, in the case of “claimed” and “unclaimed” attacks, the dividing line is not always clear; claim issuance may be delayed, which renders problematic the case’s categorization under one mutually-exclusive label. For instance, in the case of the September 11th, 2001 attacks, al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden denied responsibility for the bombings until a sudden video broadcast established his authorship in October 2004; should the attacks then be labeled as claimed, or divided into separate segments with October 29th, 2004 as the dividing point? What of those attacks claimed under a pseudonym, or attempts by non-credible or false actors to assume responsibility? Or, if the attack is committed anonymously, what of authorities’ identification of the perpetrator immediately or shortly after the attacks; does true anonymity matter, or is it simply public attribution of ownership that tips the balance between claimed and unclaimed acts of violence?

Given this constraint, Goertz (2006) proposes a case selection based upon a synthesis of the typology and “fuzzy set” approaches as it concerns “defining ideal types in terms of the most

---

7 This assumption was borne out in Hopf’s own research, which found that Soviet identity did not alter significantly following the removal of Khrushchev (2009, p.303).
exclusive features (‘and’) while recognizing that cases will evince a subset (‘or’) of those characteristics” (p.84, cited in Klotz & Prakash, 2009, p.57). The demarcation of “claimed” and “unclaimed” attacks is similarly “fuzzy” and necessitates definition as it is applied to the research presented here. Yet as Klotz and Prakash (2009) recognize, “the tendency to contextualize concepts need not be an insurmountable problem for comparing across cases (…) even an elusive concept like ‘regime’ has fuelled reams of insightful research on international cooperation and global governance, despite abiding definitional disputes” (p.45). Thus, even within the contested area of terrorism studies, scholarly and policy-related gains may be made despite the absence of absolute consensus as to definitional particulars, both as it concerns claim status as well as the subject of terrorism itself.

This study posits an understanding of a “claimed” terrorist attack as follows: any attack committed by a terrorist actor\(^8\) for which a credible and authentic claim of responsibility\(^9\) was issued by the perpetrator. An “unclaimed” attack is understood as follows: any attack by the aforementioned range of actors for which no credible or verified claim was issued, including those claims made via a pseudonym, false claiming by a group not responsible for the attack, or those groups to whom an attack is attributed solely on the basis of material evidence, political speculation, or historic behavioral patterns rather than formal claim making. An attempt was made to minimize the time lapse between attack execution and any issued claim of responsibility in order to preserve the integrity of distinct categories.

---

\(^8\) As defined by the 2010 United States list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations and the University of Maryland START database, or those homegrown groups inspired/trained by an actor contained therein.

\(^9\) As determined by investigating authorities
With regard to the dimensions along which the cases were paired, care was taken to match the attacks according to Mill’s Method of Difference by selecting from the gambit of al Qaeda attacks (or those of homegrown cells which it trained or inspired) those cases sharing similar circumstantial factors aside from claim status. In particular, the researcher attempted to account for those characteristics identified by previous scholarship as having an effect on claim making behavior, such as group ideology, attack method, target type, degree of state sponsorship, nature of the proffered grievance, and cultural roots of both attacker and attacked. With the exception of the 2004 Madrid bombings, each unclaimed case is furthermore one for which al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden explicitly denied involvement. The particulars of each pairing are related below.

**Table 1: Selected Pairs of Unclaimed/Claimed Case Studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unclaimed Attacks</th>
<th>Claimed Attacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998 US Embassy bombings,</td>
<td>2008 Danish Embassy bombing, Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi, Kenya &amp; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 USS Cole bombing, Aden, Yemen</td>
<td>2005 Aqaba rocket attacks, Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 Madrid train bombings, Spain</td>
<td>2005 London subway bombings, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1998 US Embassy Bombings vs. 2008 Danish Embassy Bombing**

Both operations appear to have been conducted by the Afghanistan-based al Qaeda faction and were similarly executed through the use of late-morning suicide truck bombers. Perpetrated by the same group of actors and without the benefit accorded by state sponsorship, the two cases control for religious and ideological doctrine as well as motivating grievance. The bombings
were conducted in response to a perceived slight against the Muslim nation and galvanized by the “plight” of the terrorists’ “Muslim brothers and sisters.” In turn, the attacked states ascribe to similar Western-democratic values or, in the case of the host nations, share a contested space as both a product and current ally of former Western colonizing powers. Furthermore, though the attacks were targeted primarily towards American and Danish nationals, in both instances the causalities consisted mainly of local civilian staff. The selected targets represent outposts of the attacked countries’ prestige and influence in addition to constituting their primary channel of communication with the host society.

2000 USS Cole Bombing vs. 2005 Aqaba Rocket Attacks

Perpetrated against physical projections of American military might, the attacks targeted US naval ships deployed in the Middle East that were not engaged in combat activities at the time of attack. Both operations were attributed to one of the primary al Qaeda factions (e.g. the Afghani and Iraqi branches), though to differing outcomes; the attack on the USS Cole resulted successfully in structural damage and the deaths of American sailors, whereas the Aqaba rockets missed their intended target and produced only collateral damage. Executed without state support, both cases are viewed by the United States Armed Forces as of key significance within the context of attacks against their naval forces.

2004 Madrid Train Bombings vs. 2005 London Subway Bombings

This pairing is unique to the study in that both bombings were committed by homegrown, self-radicalized terrorist sects relying on al Qaeda training and/or inspiration against the transit systems of major Western European capitals using similar detonating devices and tactics. For a
time, each operation was considered the worst bombing in Europe since the Second World War as well as the worst terrorist atrocity within each country. Both bombings were shortly followed by another failed attempt (a bomb planted under the rail in Spain and a second attempt to bomb the London Underground), with the justification for the initial attacks centering on the country’s support for the US-led War on Terror. At the time of the bombings both the United Kingdom and Spain were considered leading allies of the United States (particularly in counter-terrorism matters), though both have long been considered havens or transit points for Islamic radicals despite decades-long traditions of handling domestic nationalist terrorism. It should be noted that in both instances the grassroots nature of the perpetrating cell resulted in substantial bewilderment as to the exact nature of the relationship between the bombers and al Qaeda Central. In the case of the London bombings, the confusion accompanying al-Zawahiri’s delayed claim (roughly two months after the fact) appears to have been an organizational strategy rather than an inability to communicate, given that the group has a documented history of following up ambiguous claims with more substantive and credible messages when it so desires (see the 2008 Danish Embassy bombing or the 2002 Mombasa attacks).

C. Methodology: Justification of the Discourse Analytic Approach

This study is designed as the initial foray of a larger research agenda that proposes to examine the linkage between the media content surrounding claimed/unclaimed terrorist events, public opinion, and the formulation of counter-terrorism and security policy. The research utilizes a discourse analytic approach modeled off that of Hopf (2009) to investigate the assumed but untested variation in the construction of a terrorist identity and that of their target counterpart within claimed/unclaimed attacks. If such a distinction exists, the findings of the current
investigation would be advantageous to the application of process-tracing in identifying media content and its use of problem-framing as a causal mechanism in influencing public sentiment and the formulation of government policy.

Like process-tracing, discourse analysis and the accompanying constructivist framework demonstrate a proclivity towards the examination of process and change (Fierke 2003); indeed, it has been suggested that an interpretivist research agenda can serve both as a precursor of and compliment to a process-tracing research design. Why, in the context of terrorism, is it then essential to examine terrorist operations as processes delineated both temporally and discursively rather than treating them as separate incidents? As Davis (2005) observes, “[t]hough it may make sense for some purposes to conceive of cases as discrete empirical entities, sometimes it makes more sense to think of them as complex phenomena, each of which comes with a history” (p.175). Simply put, a population’s experience with terrorism cannot be summarized as a list of distinct events but more accurately resembles a complex web of sustained relationships, wherein the response to every new attack is built upon understandings of and reactions to previous incidents and their perpetrators. Within this conceptualization, the use of discourse analysis may partially compensate for the loss of certain essential information and the oversimplification that Alexander George admits could undermine the validity and usefulness of a more positivist process-oriented approach (1979, p.47).

In applying an interpretivist methodology and ontology to the examination of terrorist claim-making, not only does the current study seek to compensate for the oversights of previous scholarship that has limited itself to a purely positivist framework but it also seeks to provide a
foundation for anticipated future research. As Lin (1998) has convincingly advised, should researchers have the opportunity to combine positivistic and interpretivist research they should begin with an “exploratory interpretivist study” in order to suggest hypotheses and mechanisms that may serve as the basis for positivistic research. The reverse forces researchers to “impose a ‘plausible’ theoretical structure on the data before they examine it, which could easily leave out an important variable or include a nonessential one.” Because a positivist study will by definition exclude contextual information that may be relevant to an interpretivist study, the initial use of an interpretivist approach will, at the least, allow positivist studies to justify the omitted information as nonessential to the relationships under study based upon previous findings (Lin 1998). Hopf (2009) confirms this assessment: “noninterpretivist methods are most appropriate to the analysis of evidence that already has been collected through interpretivist, hermeneutic, ethnographic, or discourse analytic means” (p.293). Before examining a link between terrorist identity and public opinion in constraining policy formulation, it is necessary to first establish the nature of that identity, the alternative discourses available, and how the dominant narrative interacts and delineates the corresponding understanding of both terrorist and target.

The research proposed here is intended to answer the “what” of terrorist identity in media content and thereby shed light on how such depictions contribute to the cultivation of a certain public perspective. Yet as Wendt (1999) has argued, such constitutive questions are in fact explanatory and not merely descriptive: “[t]here are always ‘two stories to tell,’¹⁰ but they are not causal versus descriptive (…) Arguments from disparate sources [e.g. Charles Cross on the double-helix model or William Dray on the appropriate role of historians] suggest that theories

¹⁰ For more on this concept, see M. Hollis & S. Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. USA: Oxford UP, 1990.
which answer ‘what’ or ‘how possible’ do ‘explain’ the world” (p.86). What follows, then, is a discussion of current interpretivist standards of scholarship as they relate to positivist criteria.

One must first recognize the divergence and consequential incomparability of interpretivist and positivist criteria of acceptable scholarship. For those in the positivist camp, the standard to which one’s results must be compared is the “averaging” effect—the “effect that one might imagine a variable having if the world allowed for a series of replication under the same conditions”—so as to be representative in the sense of the “typical.” Comparatively, interpretivists seek a standard based upon accuracy of detail so as to produce a complete and specific representation, representative in the sense of the “faithful” (Lin 1998). There is further divergence in the handling of uncertainty within both types of research designs. Positivist approaches reduce uncertainty through the comparison of as many observations as possible on particular dimensions (those deemed important by the hypothesis), whereas interpretivists rely on exacting reportage of the circumstances under study and the thickness of the description to produce accurate research (Lin 1998). As such, the primarily constitutive questions investigated by interpretivists, critical theorists, and so forth elicit misunderstanding when judged by the standards of positivists’ primarily causal investigations (Wendt, 1999, p.85), despite the fact that both aspire to and generally succeed in “explaining” the world.

Both positivist and interpretivist researchers utilizing qualitative methods have developed sophisticated methods of evaluating and analyzing data to address concerns of validity; both traditions require the documentation of research procedures that may be understood by outsiders and are justified in terms of the knowledge to be obtained (Lin 1998). The standards of both
groups are legitimate standards by which to evaluate the validity and truth of a body of research, and their incommensurability makes one neither better nor worse but simply employed for different reasons. Within the context of this research, the interpretivist approach is preferred given the need for particularized detail; in seeking to establish the nature of terrorist identity as an affecting factor, the study relies on an exhaustive and nuanced recounting of such narratives to produce a complete and accurate representation. Every detail is important in its ability to potentially affect audience interpretation. Positivist approaches, which pass over such fine distinction in favor of comprehensive averages, would be unable to provide the necessary depth of description. Despite the incomparability of positivist and interpretivist research aims, answers to “why” questions necessitate answers to “how” and “what” questions (Lin 1998; Lupovici 2007; Wendt 1999) so that even positivist researchers must engage in at least implicit constitutive analyses. Given that some of the most important natural science theories are of this type (e.g. the double-helix model of DNA or the kinetic theory of heat) (Wendt 1999, p.85), the value of meticulous interpretivist research has proven essential to expanding the field of knowledge.

D. Methodology: Method of Discourse Analysis

The method of discourse analysis employed in this investigation is taken from Hopf’s procedure for investigating Soviet identity using mass texts (2009). Consisting of four distinct steps, the design proceeds as follows:

1. **Finding identities**: the enumeration of the “we” and “other” identities found in each text in terms of who is being represented, and how.
2. **Contextualizing identities**: the process of discerning what an identity means within the particular context of the original text. At the end stages of this process, the identities that predominate in the literature are quantitatively identified.

3. **Intertextualizing identities**: the process of identifying whether an identity holds the same meaning across sources. If so, this step renders a powerful case for intertextual consensus on a particular identity: “the deepest stability a social structure can attain is when no questions of disruption arise, not when ideas of disrupting it are periodically entertained, but then rejected after calculating relative costs and benefits, or after deciding one had better not” (Hopf 2009, p.284). If not, the revealing of alternate understandings across sources given a nominally same identity is equally noteworthy.

4. **Intertextualization to discourses of identity**: the process of conveying how the intertextualized identities relate to one another in constructing a coherent account of the identity in question to form a discourse. A “discourse of identity” is the collection of intertextualized identities that appear repeatedly when a certain identity is constructed. A discourse predominates to the extent that it is numerically superior to alternate discourses; however, true dominance of a discourse means that this superiority must prevail over all other discourses across the range of sources. An alternative identity may be defined as one that exists across sources and consists of a collection of identities forming a counter to the primary view of self. These non-dominant identities may be subordinate, marginalized, or silenced as compared to the dominant identity (Klotz & Prakash, 2009, p.51)


**E. Data Sources**

*The Use of Large-Sized Newspapers*

Newspapers have often served as a critical medium for social science investigations; prior scholarship has faithfully documented their utility as a source, including more detailed content (Nacos 2003; Paletz et al. 1982, cited in Altheide 1987), ease of access, and archival completeness (Padilla 2007). Though these advantages are important to the investigation at hand, newspapers have been selected as the primary medium for another important reason—the communicative impetus of their journalists. As David Skok, Senior Producer of Online Content for Global News notes, the “ultimate purpose of journalism is to communicate with, and on behalf of, the audience” (Hogg 2010). The Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism elaborates on this assessment, endowing journalism with the central aim of providing audiences with “accurate and reliable information” that “creates a map for citizens to navigate society” for the purpose of functioning in society (2011). The mainstream conceptualization of journalism and its practitioners consequently assumes that individuals are able to understand and make use of what they read and implies that one of the duties of the journalist is to communicate said information in the most readily understandable fashion that both accounts for and is sensitive to the culture and experiences of his/her readership. The advantage afforded by such mass popular texts—for even if some characterize papers such as The New York Times as elitist, there is often an overlap of shared content with smaller, localized papers in the form of wire service articles (e.g. Reuters or The Associated Press) or even small newspapers’ reprinting of articles authored by their large-circulation counterparts—parallels R. Williams’s assertion that the authors of texts aimed at the masses (e.g. novels) “show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways” (1973, p.165). Thus, it may be said that
journalists also “deliberately select words the average reader will immediately recognize as communicating enough information about the character. Because of their desire to be understood,” such authors act as “unintentional ethnographers for the societies about which they write” (Hopf, 2009, p.288). Consequently, the use of newspaper articles provides the researcher with an articulate, detailed record of the identities and related assumptions under investigation written in a manner accessible to and shaped by elite and popular culture. This prevents an investigation restricted to a select few and provides a more accurate and relevant base for future research on media content and public opinion.

The case that must be made here is, therefore, justification for the use of large-circulation newspapers as a source of analysis. At the most rudimentary level is the quantitative explanation; newspapers of this scale simply reach a larger number of individuals in the population, meaning that their content is able to both reflect and affect the perceptions of a proportionately larger group. Furthermore, in terms of data availability, Pew Research Center’s State of the Media 2004 Report records that articles in smaller newspaper are shorter in length; 64% of large newspaper stories topped 1000 words, whereas only 13-29% of small to medium-sized newspapers did so. At the largest papers, the average article length totaled approximately 1200 words, whereas the average fell short of 600 at the smallest papers (PEJ 2004). Shorter articles may be less likely to yield the detailed accounts that are required for source-intensive qualitative methods such as discourse analysis. Aside from content length, it must also be noted that the news reported becomes more local and less international as circulation size decreases (PEJ 2004). Given that the events under investigation in this study take place overseas—though they may involve
American forces or interests—newspapers with a rapport for covering national and international events are essential.

Yet in order to compensate for accusations of elitism that have been occasionally levied against major newspapers, this study also includes data from the wire services of The Associated Press and Reuters. These services supplement national and international coverage not only for large papers but also for those with smaller circulations that rely on such sources to complement their limited news gathering resources (PEJ 2004). Consequently, the sources that have been identified in this study are ones made available to and consumed by all segments of the literate population, which strengthens the likelihood that their content would reflect the dominant cultural discourses on terrorism.

**Justification of Country-Specific Sources**

For this study, The Associated Press, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* will be used as representative measures of American media culture. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are two of the largest, nationally-circulated broadsheet papers in the country; in the case of the former, it is also the most highly-trafficked American news website and boasts the highest volume of articles as compared to other papers (PEJ 2004). The *Washington Post*, headquartered in the nation’s capital, produces a superior quantity of articles on national politics and provides intensive coverage of US interests abroad. For its part, The Associated Press is the leading national wire service; innumerable news sources within and outside of the United States utilize its articles.
British coverage of the terrorist acts will be collected from Reuters, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times*. Reuters, headquartered in London, is the world’s largest international news agency and has a stated policy of “neutral language” when covering terrorist events (Thomson Reuters 2011). Also based in London, the left-leaning *Guardian* is one of the top-selling broadsheets and the largest English-language newspaper presence on the Internet behind *The New York Times*—in the case of the United Kingdom, it is also the highest-trafficked virtual news presence (Reid & Teizeira 2010). To balance the political leanings of *The Guardian*, content from the center-right *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* will be used in combination, given the difference in article output between these sources and their more liberal competitor. Both broadsheets are amongst the top three most-circulated of their kind in Britain.

When identifying sources from a non-English speaking nation in which an attack occurred, English translations of articles from the primary newspapers in each respective nation were gathered via the *World News Connection (WNC)* service. Prior scholarship has established that high-quality English translations of original sources (such as those offered by the WNC) yield approximately the same scores under the rigor of content analysis as the originals and thus the use of such translations will not distort conclusions drawn from translated documents (Hermann 1980; Winter 1973).

*The Selection of Articles*

News articles span a year from the date of the terrorist incident in order to capture not only the immediate aftermath of the attack but also the lingering repercussions of trauma and details of the ongoing investigation. In instances where the quantity of articles was of a scope that
reasonably permitted an analysis of all relevant articles, the analysis included the entire body of stories pertaining to the attack in question. For events where the quantity of articles generated surpassed the temporal resources of the investigator and given that selecting a random sample of articles would potentially eliminate key stories and bias the resulting analysis, the following methods were followed: (1) duplicate articles (the same story released for subsequent editions on the same day) were eliminated; (2) articles grounded in subjective opinion (those from the “commentary,” “opinion,” or “editorial” sections) were eliminated\(^\text{11}\); (3) those articles meeting the 600-word threshold of the “average article in a medium-sized paper” (according to the PEJ 2004) were retained, as it was assumed they were among the main features of the paper and were of sufficient length to provide data for the qualitative methodology employed.

\(^{\text{11}}\) The elimination of these articles was justified on an authorial basis; opinion or editorial pieces are generally composed or decided by an Editorial Board, the staff of which are separate from the newspaper’s primary news staff (see \textit{USA Today} or \textit{The New York Times}) and who are generally distanced from news meetings, story assignments, and day-to-day newsroom operations (Passante, 2007, p.28). Additionally, many of these pieces were more opinionated restatements of news content previously touched upon in the primary news article and therefore a narrative to which the audience would have already been exposed.
CHAPTER 4: CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A THEORETICAL APPROACH

The adoption of a constructivist theoretical framework is predicated upon both the investigative limitations established by strictly positivist assumptions as well as the suitability of constructivism as an approach to the phenomenon of terrorism. It is noteworthy that a significant proportion of relevant scholarship assumes a positivist interpretation of the world, and in so doing inherently perpetuates certain contradictions within the theory’s application to claim making. First, the limited body of empirically tested claim-related literature relies overwhelmingly on the use of quantitative data, which narrows the understanding of terrorist events by quantifying only a portion of the elements inherent to an attack (those able to be translated into numerical form, such as casualty figures, location, group or single actor, etc.). Such datasets tend to be inadequate in their ability to perform a detailed examination of relevant factors—for instance, the nature and intensity of public response.

Perhaps due in part to the privileging of quantitative techniques, positivist theory limits valid data to that associated with observable phenomenon. This has contributed to the conceptualization of violence as a “poor communicator,” in that it discounts the idea that who commits a terrorist act is equally significant to the understanding and interpretation of the act itself. An IRA bombing in Belfast, for instance, may not inspire the same level of shock and awe as the unpredicted detonation of a bomb in sleepy Oklahoma by persons unknown or an airborne assault on New York City’s iconic symbol of American economic power. Yet the same scholarship simultaneously assumes the existence of a qualitative difference between claimed/unclaimed attacks and their potential audience impact that cannot be explained under the
positivist framework, given that the primary factor of variance between the two types is, in fact, actor identity. Positivism fails to explain the divergence of response to attacks that are similar in all considerations except claim status. Where terrorists are concerned, all may not be created equal in the minds of the public; the nature of terrorist actors in particular should function as a research question rather than an assumption (Klotz & Lynch, 2007, p.94).

In ignoring the non-material, positivism additionally excludes elements such as cultural difference that previous literature (e.g. Wright 2009) has indicated may affect the utility of claiming terrorist attacks. Given the constraints on a terror cell’s material resources and its ability to physically inflict harm (Mulaj, 2010, p.20), one of the greatest power reserves such actors possess is their potential for coercive persuasion so as to convince others of the threat’s reality (Fierke, 2003, p.67), which may or may not involve a physical demonstration. Furthermore, positivist theory does not account for change across time and space and thus does not explain the fluctuation in public perception a terrorist actor over time (e.g. the perceived threat from a relatively unknown al Qaeda in 1998 as compared to that conceptualized by a desensitized population following a decade of extensive public dissection of the group and its agenda).

In comparison, constructivist theory accounts for both the material and non-material elements of terrorist incidents, including the changing awareness of a particular actor in the minds of the government and public. It examines an act of terrorism within a framework of socially-constructed identity and interests that permits the attribution of significance to elements outside of the physical through a focus on the interaction between terrorist and audience. Factors such as
historical context and processes of knowledge production may help to explain the variation in reaction to atrocities that positivist theory is unable to address. The compatibility of the constructivist framework with qualitative methods yielding richly detailed data allows for greater insight into this phenomenon. Moreover, given that power can be exercised through both physical capabilities as well as relationships (Klotz & Lynch, 2007, p.11), constructivism’s challenge to the positivist conceptualization of power as material resources is particularly relevant.

Constructivism provides a means to explore the fluctuating relationship between particular terrorist identities and audience response that has been ignored in traditional terrorism research, a factor made even more relevant given that the meaning of a terrorist event is collectively generated by the interaction between terrorist and audience (Hulsse & Spencer, 2008, p.576; Zulaika & Douglass, 2008, p.29). This is even more pertinent in the instance of the unclaimed attack, in which the identity of the perpetrator is unknown. When paired with the method of discourse analysis, constructivism allows the researcher to inductively develop a pattern of meaning from these interactions that accounts for the fact that the complex picture of reality is superior to predictive positivist mechanisms.

The use of constructivist theory also addresses a gap in the strategic choice framework used to explain terrorist mannerisms, in that the strategic choice model neglects the reality that few (if any) sub-state activist groups engage in their struggles solely for strategic power concerns; there is inevitably a plethora of social, ideological, theological, and other factors that must be taken into consideration (Brannan et al., 2010, p.6). The study of terrorist claim making behavior
necessitates constructivism’s ability to account for the influences of language, culture, and historical context, as well as its deviation from the over-determination of “structure” in neorealist and neoliberal theory (Fierke, 2010, p.180). Constructivist theory incorporates a social dimension that is lacking from both the strategic choice framework as well as positivist approaches while still acknowledging the rationality of individuals within a social context.
A. A Brief Introduction to Anonymity

What constitutes uncertainty depends on “what we want to be able to predict, what we can predict, and what we might be able to do about it” (Marris, 1996, p.16). Arguably, uncertainty is at its most prevalent when there is urgent need for definitive identification despite the lack of evidence and there is little that can be done to alter these odds. Anonymity comprises a particular type of uncertainty that is linked with the inability to detect the identity of another individual or group—the inability to place an entity within the known pantheon to allow for prediction of behavior and appropriate response.

According to Williams (1988), anonymity is a “condition that frees individuals from social evaluation or scrutiny” (p.765); having a name for something makes it “knowable” to the audience. There “may be individuals with whom we have spoken on the phone, whose names we know and on whose behalf we might have had to advocate in some way. In this regard, the anonymity of individuals is overcome for us primarily because we know them by name” (p.763). Yet thus stated, it may be argued that it is impossible for any entity to achieve true anonymity. Human nature dictates the delegation of a name and estimated attributes to unspecified phenomenon so as to render them able to be processed and categorized; our knowledge is relative, depending upon comparisons with other “knowns” for understanding. In the case of an anonymous terrorist bombing, for instance, before the perpetrator’s identity is revealed by investigative proceedings, s/he is merely that—the perpetrator, the bomber. An identity, however temporary, is constructed to compensate for that which is missing. We may not know activist
Dorothy is guilty of a recent string of jewelry robberies, but we do know that the robber snatches only diamonds (and nothing else) from establishments accused of selling blood diamonds, which allows us to ascribe certain motivations or principles to the thief. In essence, anonymity is a war of labels between the sender and recipient underlined by the assumption that the sender derives some benefit, whether material or psychological, from the identity that is attributed to him (otherwise s/he would find an alternate means of expression). Anonymity is the set of characteristics, motivations, and persona that is attributed to a specific actor or actors in the absence of his/her given identity; it is the degree to which a message recipient perceives the source as unknown and unspecified (Anonymous, 1998, p.387) but it is also the content with which the recipient fills said gap and the resulting relationship between sender and recipient via a new mediator.

B. Introduction to Case Studies

Within the context of the following case studies, this research has identified a list of primary actors: (1) perpetrators; (2) suspects; (3) general terrorists; (4) al Qaeda; (5) Osama bin Laden; (6) the attacked state (the United States, Denmark, Spain, the United Kingdom); (7) the state foil (Kenya/Tanzania, Pakistan, Yemen, Jordan, the United States). Perpetrators encompasses those individuals responsible for the bombings before they are identified as particularized suspects. Alternately, suspects describes flesh-and-blood persons possessing unique histories and names once they have been detained by authorities. Note that perpetrators and suspects act as complements in that perpetrators forms the anonymous counterpart to suspects, just as al Qaeda
and *Osama bin Laden* form the named counterparts to *general terrorism*. The aforementioned pairs (*perpetrators-suspects, general terrorism-al Qaeda/Osama bin Laden*), as they relate to the present case studies, describe the same actors with varying degrees of specificity; *suspects* and *al Qaeda/Osama bin Laden* are “known” to the broader audience and therefore the subjects of memory recall, while the creation and development of *perpetrators* and *general terrorism* must be formulated by the receivers at the same time the message is being processed.

Anonymity is, ironically, a fundamentally social phenomenon, requiring an audience of at least one person—one cannot be anonymous if no one is aware of his or her existence (Marx, 1999, p.100). Rather, it is the recognition that there is “something to predict” and the realization that we have limited means by which to do so that creates the condition of flux within which anonymity functions. Thus, the analysis also encompasses the *attacked state* (the primary state target of the attack) as well as the *state foil* (either the nation in which the attack occurred, if not the *attacked state*, or that most frequently mentioned in comparison) as they respond to the multi-faceted identity of the bombers.

Analyses examine the case study data by dividing the investigative period into four stages, as determined by the shifting terrorist identity:

- **No Claims of Responsibility**: no groups or individuals have accepted responsibility for the bombing. There is scant evidence illuminating the criminals’ identities and attempts at further definition are captured by attributions to the *perpetrator*.

---

12 This is possible given that the “general terrorism” discussed throughout the selected case studies is used by the media to refer almost exclusively to Islamic terrorism (except where otherwise specified).
• *Unverifiable Claims of Responsibility*: several groups have unreliably claimed credit for the attack but a perceived lack of authenticity invalidates the assertions, resulting in continued use of *perpetrator* as bomber.

• *Tentative Arrest of Suspects*: authorities detain the first group of individuals whose extent of involvement is yet undetermined, establishing a parallel between *perpetrators* and *suspects*.

• *Formal Arrest/Indictment of Suspects*: convinced of the *suspects’* involvement and guilt, authorities announce certainty of guilt for those detained, theoretically accompanied by shifting blame from *perpetrators* to *suspects*.

The discourse surrounding the previously identified actors is explored and summarized across the four investigative phases for each of the six paired cases; for the purpose of readability, unclaimed attacks immediately precede their claimed counterparts. Thereafter, overall themes and differences surrounding the identity narratives within all claimed/unclaimed attacks are examined, followed by an analysis of those patterns from a problem-solving and decision making framework.
C. Case Study: 1998 US Embassy Bombings

What follows is a summary of the narrative discourse surrounding the primary actors in the 1998 US Embassy bombings, divided by investigative phase to highlight shifting understandings in media characterizations. The principally descriptive format presents the reader with a detailed accounting of evolving identity roles linked to each actor, the significance of which will be evaluated following the presentation of all case studies.

No Claims of Responsibility

The immediate media reaction to the bombing reads nothing extraordinary into the attack, committed by skilled but normal criminal actors against a world superpower well accustomed to such antagonistic actions. The unknown perpetrators are seen as untouchable by state authorities. Their inability to be apprehended is not so much a product of American investigative failure as simply a result of the group’s operative sophistication. The difficulty in identifying the bombers can be attributed to four factors: (1) the skill of the terrorist group – careful, coordinated, and experienced, the bombers are hardly amateurs (NYT6, WP1, WP2, AP2, AP3, AP5, G3, R10, R13, R140); (2) the overwhelming array of possible bombers – the bombers could be any of 200,000 suspect individuals or 3,000 groups (NYT3, WP1, DTT2); (3) possible government backing – the attack may have been conducted by a combination of terror cells and state governments, whose extensive resources assisted in the cover-up of the operation (G4, R7); (4) the “superman” complex – the perpetrators are inhuman, equipped with the ability to surpass normal security measures and unable to be “stopped by normal means” such as metal detectors, armed guards, or concrete barriers (AP2, R5).
Barring the less prevalent “superman” discourse, the perpetrators constitute a skilled but normal threat. The United States consequently does not respond with panic or hysteria, despite initial surprise and concern. Rather, such demonstrations of aggression are “old news”; the recipient of 30,000 threats annually (WP2, AP4, AP5), the US is “a major power, and people are going to try to embarrass us or take us down” (WP3) given the superpower is an “obvious target for anything the West is considered responsible for” (AP2, R4). Grim, deliberate, and decidedly statesmanlike, America’s vows to “never give up” and “spare no effort and use all means at our disposal” in locating the bombers (NYT4, G6, DTT1, R5, R8, R9) resonate with credibility and experience (AP5, G1). The country projects confidence in its ability to deal with catastrophe and signals this with the immediate dispatch of aid and investigators (NYT1, AP3, AP4, G3, R3), sending knowledgeable teams who embody the “best chance for those trapped in the rubble” (AP7).

Given that the perpetrators are seen as a normal threat, Osama bin Laden is likewise framed as a moral deviant and social outcast, defined primarily by the absence of “civilized” characteristics. An exile rejected by both state and family (NYT1, DTT2), the threat posed by bin Laden is be undermined by his marginaled status (DTT2) as a sub-state criminal actor whose argument with the American superpower is subject to asymmetric power imbalances. The leader of al Qaeda is a matter best handled by law enforcement officials, not the Pentagon.

Unverifiable Claims of Responsibility

Yet with the onset of attack claims, the contained normalcy of the perpetrator threat is eschewed by its more inhuman qualities, causing the United States to falter in its defensive strategy. The
bombers now constitute a novel, never before seen danger (AP13) capable of rendering the “end of the world” (NYT18) via atrocities far “better than Oklahoma City” (NYT24), the previous benchmark of extremist carnage. This far-reaching conspiracy extends beyond the actual bombers to a larger web of hostility (NYT20, AP20), made all the more serious as the perpetrators are not “crazies” but rational actors who execute deliberate, advanced (WP12, AP17), well-planned attacks (NYT8, NYT29, R14) with “audacious timing and…breathtaking…logistical skill” (NYT24), facing death with utter calm (DTT3, DTT4). Having escaped greater devastation only by luck or chance (NYT22), America’s prior assurances of security ring hollow.

Attempts to specify the exact nature of this new evil result in the application of the classic “villainous mastermind” archetype. No longer a predictable bombing plot, the attacks are so extraordinary that they could have emanated only from one of the “masterminds of international terror” or are the brainchild of a rogue state government (WP5). Complimenting this new understanding of perpetrators, Osama bin Laden likewise evolves from isolated patron to charismatic terrorist leader (NYT7, NYT8, NYT20) whose influence spans the entirety of Africa and the Middle East (NYT8, WP5, AP8).

Faced with new insecurities, the US issues repeated vows to deliver justice (WP5, AP8, AP17, DTT3, R17, R24) and its presence in Africa adopts a correspondingly martial quality that all but eliminates previous humanitarian assistance (WP10, AP21, DTT5, R19, R20, R34). Amid accusations of anti-Kenyan bias, “wide-eyed and battle bright” Marines prowl in full battle gear as America barricades itself behind razor wire and sandbags (NYT7, DTT5). These images of
separation contrast with repeated oaths to forswear isolationism (NYT22, NYT23) which are motivated not by aforementioned American bravery and defiance but by a grudging obligation to support global peace and democracy (NYT8, AP12, AP20, R26).

Yet the inability of the US to deliver on its promises and identify, much less apprehend, the perpetrators calls into question the nation’s credibility as well as its anti-terrorist resources. Despite the dedicated thoroughness of American investigators, who continue to “pour (…) over repots,” “raking through the grass” on hands and knees in search of evidence (NYT19, NYT22, R18, R24, R32), America has repeatedly proven itself second best in handling previous terrorist attacks. Unable to gather court-worthy evidence against even known terrorists, the nation has not found or prosecuted those guilty of the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, or even the 1975 murder of Athens station chief Richard Welch (NYT8, AP8, AP10, R18, R28). Worse still, America’s very ability to “understand and nullify Islamic terrorism” was lost with the 1983 bombing of the Beirut Embassy (NYT24), implying that the state is incapable of apprehending these non-traditional perpetrators.

**Tentative Arrest of Suspects**

An interesting phenomenon occurs during the third phase of the investigation, the first instance in which there is a blatant paralleling of known and unknown identities. In the case of perpetrators, public outrage is directed at bombers who now are not only skilled executors but morally responsible for the tragedy. Even as credit is allotted to their considerable skill (NYT39, NYT55, AP25, DTT6, DTT7, R61), technological proficiency (NYT30), and intelligent, meticulous planning (WP18, WP45, AP22, G8), perpetrators are condemned as cowards (WP14,
AP22, AP23, AP26, AP28, G18, R46, R52), murderers (AP23, AP28, AP49, R39, R75), and ruthless killers (DTT7). They are not small-time criminals but rather the new, more vicious enemy of Western Civilization with coercive power and reach equivalent to that of a nuclear superpower: “not even the Soviets dared to strike at the civilian population of the West as bloodily as terrorists have in recent weeks” (DTT11). The morally corrupt perpetrators are capable of independent action and constitute a serious threat in their attempts to kill massive numbers of people (NYT48, NYT52). They form a criminal conspiracy that has “tentacles stretching to other countries” (NYT55) with “threads all over the world” (NYT55, DTT18). The terrorists in question are slimy, repulsive, and subhuman, insects that infest manifold places in innumerable unseen quantities. When paired with indicators of disproportionate power potential, such repulsive qualities lend themselves to a true security threat.

In the case of suspects, outrage is ironically channeled not towards the arrested individuals but rather at the nation of Pakistan, the first to make an investigative “break” and issuer of a snub to the US Government in transferring the primary suspect directly to Kenyan, not American, authorities (AP45, R73). This sentiment is complimented by a good measure of contempt for the continued incompetence of African authorities, despite the assistance of “advanced” Western nations (NYT31, NYT38, NYT55). Kenya in particular is a backwater (WP16), a web of inefficiency and corruption (R45); in what should be the largest case ever handled by the domestic police forces, said units are instead “trying to fix a brass padlock on the jail door that had frozen in the open position” while suspects are held in a “ramshackle lockup” at the Home Ministry (WP26). The fact that the suspects are not, as in the case of perpetrators, similarly endowed with herculean qualities renders this failure even more bitter (incongruously, American
domestic media paints the US as a victim of rather than colluder in others’ failures). The suspect “round-up” by the Tanzanian and Kenyan police is childish, with individuals detained on the basis of “suspicious” characteristics such as possessing Arab ancestry (NYT49, AP37, AP39, R43, R69, R70). Even the authorities themselves admit their detainees are “not prime suspects” and not a credible threat (AP22, AP23). Furthermore, doubt is cast on Pakistan’s contribution given the nation’s flexible relationship with torture (NYT38, NYT48)—“American legal niceties do not apply [and] a suspect might be tempted to confess to anything” (WP37)—and the lack of a follow-up confession to American investigators (NYT49, NYT55, WP38, WP41, AP46, AP48).

A final distinction between perpetrators and suspects is the growing tendency to characterize the former as autonomous agents, whereas the latter are unfailingly depicted as “disciples” (NYT45) of bin Laden or part of a team ultimately controlled by the Saudi (DTT15). The independent agency of each suspect as a potential bringer of destruction is therefore inferior to that of the more capable perpetrator, who has been established from the first as a complete terrorist unit and whose external networks act to augment rather than constrain unilateral action. Suspects are thus dependent not only for their resources but for their very status as a threat on their relationship with a more intimidating figure.

_Bin Laden_ steps in to fill this position, escalating his transformation from marginalized criminal to legitimate, center-stage actor. Terms of separation such as “exile” and “extremist” are increasingly replaced by verbiage generally associated with positions of authority in Western society. The “president” of a “terrorist university” (NYT46, WP49, G9), his role evolves to that
of “supreme commander” (NYT38) of a “financial empire” (NYT30, DTT15). He is further outfitted with daunting weaponry (an “arsenal of surface-to-air missiles, mortars, rockets, and tanks (WP42)), a private army of Islamic zealots (G8), and thousands of well-trained, seasoned terrorists and guerilla fighters (NYT30, WP54, DTT12) commanded by lieutenants worldwide (NYT54, NYT66). A formidable foe, bin Laden fulfills the promise of his Napoleonic trappings as a “state unto himself” (NYT30, WP46). A skilled executive (NYT30), the Saudi is endowed with the ability to declare war (NYT45, NYT46, AP54, G8), alliances with Sudan, Afghanistan, and Iran (WP49, DTT7), the means to pursue WMD (NYT44, NYT45), and even a fortified mountaintop stronghold linking him to a “diplomatic core” of fanatics posted across the Middle East, Asia, Europe, the United States, and Africa (WP38, WP39, WP47, DTT7). The debates in American tabloids of whether or not the CIA could legally assassinate the Saudi exile, given the presidential stay on assassinations against state leaders, implies that bin Laden has in fact become a head of state. An enemy of American creation (given the history between the CIA and Afghani rebels in the 1980s), it is arguable that the presentation of bin Laden as a state actor also attempts to justify American retaliatory actions of a state-to-state magnitude.

However, Osama bin Laden the statesman now also inherits supernatural attributes akin to those of the perpetrators, rendering indistinguishable the real and the fantastic. A legend (WP24), the Saudi exile is a “force majeure” (WP32), the “bogeyman” (NYT52) who exists “beyond the reach of justice” (WP38). Indeed, he can survive America’s most advanced anti-terrorist weaponry, escaping unscathed from an attack by $79 million worth of missiles, each equipped with 166 bomblets individually capable of destroying an area the size of a football field (NYT61,
WP51). This “enemy of humanity” (WP47) lurks in his mountaintop “lair” (WP39, DTT9), a shadowy overlord and vampiric figure that seeks to dim the light of Western democracy.

While *bin Laden* the statesman may be countered with traditional force, the new emergence of *bin Laden* the myth surpasses even American defensive capabilities. Consequently, the nation is cast as a trigger-happy cowboy (NYT53) in a ”Wild-West shoot-first-and-ask-questions-later” script (AP90), retaliating to “mete out rough justice” (WP52) for the bombings; tabloid magazines in New York scream the headlines, “Take that!” (R87). Despite scant evidence and weak justifications (NYT45, WP49, G9, R82), the *United States* lashes out with gratuitous violence (NYT49, NYT50, WP46, WP52, G10, DTT15, R53, R81, R94) more befitting a cornered animal (NYT51, NYT53, DTT11) than an international superpower. As hyperbolic claims of success riddle the speeches of American authorities in increasingly unbelievable attempts at reassurance—the US is “far, far away from a dead end” (NYT31) and are gathering “the strongest evidence ever obtained in a major terrorist case” (NYT44)—the once poised nation appears diminished, closing embassies (WP33, WP41, AP29, AP35, R46), curtailing NATO participation (NYT33), and evacuating Americans with “panicky” supplications (NYT40, WP41, AP52). No longer a calculating global power, the US is an underdog under siege, striking out in a hopeless attempt to forestall the inevitable.

**Formal Arrest/Indictment of Suspects**

The final phase of the investigation sees a complete divorce in the attributes associated with *perpetrators* and *suspects*; the cosmic battle against the superhuman *perpetrators* does not compare to the normalized threat presented by *bin Laden*, his *al Qaeda* organization, or the
innocent suspects. Popular outrage turns upon the US Government and its allies, who are seen as corrupt and bringers of risk, as it becomes evident that America is incapable of tackling the terrorist threat.

Media outlets initiate a complete divorce of personal agency from suspects as well as those skill sets and depravities accorded the terrorist actor. In comparison to the morally twisted perpetrators (WP55, AP55, AP124, AP125), the suspects as individuals are “devout family men” (NYT98) coerced into making confessions (NYT60) by threats to their families and pregnant wives (WP59). Nice, honest, and ordinary (NYT59, NYT67, WP64), “nobody had an inkling” (NYT56) of any proclivity towards violence. The men could have committed the attack only given the assistance and deceptive mechanisms of an outside mastermind (WP57). Since their arrest, the suspects have further been the victims of rights violations, stripped of a fair trial (NYT85, NYT88), unable to comprehend the charges against them (NYT86, NYT101) and isolated from a family for whose welfare they care more than their own (NYT91, WP66). These models of upstanding behavior, some even of American origin (NYT82, NYT98, NYT105, WP63, WP64, R109, R111), know very little about Osama bin Laden and his organization (NYT60); indeed, they would not know the terrorist leader if he “knocked at the door and tried to sell [them] cookies” (NYT108). Their roles as terrorists were a product of learned behavior rather than innate depravity and required that they be “trained in the tools of terror” (NYT57, NYT58, WP55) prior to the commitment of violence. Moreover, the suspects’ roles as “followers” or “disciples” (NYT60, WP57, WP70, AP86) ultimately displace responsibility onto the shoulders of others; they have been exonerated of guilt in favor of the perpetrators, who are the “true” terrorists.
Now the preeminent focus of the bombing investigations, *Osama bin Laden* is confirmed with international legitimacy as “emir” of his own nation (NYT83, NYT90, WP57, WP73). A “master puppeteer” with “marionettes distributed around the globe” (WP65, WP70, AP100), the Saudi directs his armies on worldwide campaigns like a game of Risk (NYT80), declaring war on the West (NYT87, WP74, A68) and constructing an anti-Western alliance between the *bin Laden* kingdom, Iran, and Sudan (NYT73, WP68). A hero to his subjects, intelligent, brave, polite, and community minded (NYT100, AP56, AP115), to his enemies the once marginalized criminal is now the “harbinger of a new era” (WP68), a monstrous legend (AP56). The danger that he poses is such that the world superpower is forced to make unprecedented foreign policy concessions that are “not the usual way of doing things” (R114). *Osama bin Laden’s* ability to wield textbook coercive power in forcing the *United States*—the most powerful state in the international system—to engage in policies it would not otherwise turns the global hierarchy on its head.

Ironically, now that America has individuals in custody its investigation begins to flag (NYT61, NYT89, WP70, G20) as public outcry targets not arrested *suspects* but *bin Laden* and the mythical *perpetrators*. The apprehending of “family men” is no longer what the public needs to feel safe. Once brilliant American integrity, already soiled by the failure to apprehend *bin Laden*, is further weakened by baseless insistence on the part of investigators that they have made “extraordinary discoveries” (NYT62, WP60) and are “convinced beyond a doubt” (WP56) that they have mounted “one of the largest and most successful overseas investigations in history” (G19, R106). Alternate leaks of the “real” story from US officials note that the Government “can’t say for sure what [is] going on” (NYT103) and is “unsure how much progress has been made” (NYT68). The *United States* has misled the public in its justifications for bombing Sudan
and Afghanistan (WP56, WP70, AP61, G19, R110) and can provide no direct evidence linking the targets to *al Qaeda’s* leader (NYT76, NYT89). Compared to America, which has not only failed to deal honestly with and protect its citizens but furthermore engaged in grievous rights violations (its simultaneous attacks against Sudanese and Afghani “innocents” that bear uncomfortable similarity to the Embassy bombings themselves), *bin Laden* appears positively virtuous.

Public outrage for the Africa bombings expands its circle of contempt from American allies to the US itself; it is the *United States* who bears “a measure of responsibility” for the existence of *bin Laden*—“we did spawn a monster” (AP72). Furthermore, had America followed the 1985 Inman recommendations (referring to security upgrades for American embassies in the wake of the Beirut bombing), “you wouldn’t have had this loss of life” (WP83). Collective governmental failure to anticipate the terrorist threat as well as brash US action in the aftermath of the bombings have forced Americans to “now have to worry about security everywhere” (NYT63), even on “safe” home soil (NYT80, WP71, R109). Kenya and Tanzania have facilitated this failure; initially praised for their cooperation and foresight (NYT64, WP65, WP75), they have been rough-handed in their handling of the investigation, raiding charity offices (AP66) and killing the ailing father of a *suspect* during a house search (NYT77). The Governments now also stand accused of failing to implement measures that would have decreased American vulnerability; Kenyan authorities previously denied a request to initiate an armed guard service (NYT64) (guards wield only long sticks), refused the creation of a special radio frequency dedicated to embassy security (NYT94), and refused to order local police to guard the building (NYT95). Blame for the bombings is laid at the feet of an adversary both reachable and familiar,
whose failures facilitated the materialization of the attack. Incumbent authorities have increased the danger through actions likely to draw retaliation, introducing the terrorist threat to the social reality of the average citizen. This new enemy could appear anywhere at any time—even next door—but the mythical perpetrators who constitute the “real” bombers are so far beyond the known reality of most citizens that there is not even the satisfaction of defining what, exactly, is to be feared.

Note that the contest between the United States and the al Qaeda organization has changed little from a traditional confrontation of state/sub-state or state/state actors; it is expected both sides will conform to the tactics and ability levels suggested by previous confrontations. Comparatively, perpetrators and general terrorists are exempted from the traditional rules of power politics; the threat they pose extends beyond physical security to a moral conflict of Biblical proportions that threatens the very fabric of Western society and is not readily defeated. Discussions of the al Qaeda threat are grounded in customary understandings of guerrilla bands; the group’s structure and aims are recognizable and therefore able to be countered. Al Qaeda is depicted as one of two models: (1) a “run-on-a-shoestring” (NYT90) extra-curricular association for the socially inept, or (2) a mafia gang (WP82, R65). In the first, the organization is comparable to an after-school club and has approximately the same retention rate, as membership dips with lack of interest or action: “[al Qaeda] didn’t have a purpose except to carry out the jihad, and since nobody carried out the jihad, it lost a lot of members” (NYT103). Its affiliates consist of “people who had no success in life and wanted to join just to keep from falling on their noses, people who love their religion but had no idea what their religion really meant, [and] people who have nothing in their heads but to fight and solve on the problems in the
world with battle” (NYT103). Neither well-organized nor hierarchical (G17, DTT7), *al Qaeda* has been constantly pressured and repeatedly compromised (WP81) and could hardly pose an insurmountable threat.

The parallel narrative is no more terrifying than the first; *al Qaeda* functions as an “organized crime family” (NYT78) whose members swear fealty (WP73) to their leader in written contracts (WP82). Formidable opponents, they plot attacks against America in secret meetings and seek backroom deals with equally shady actors, such as Sudan or Iran (NYT44, NYT73, NYT84, DTT7), seeking to drive Western influence from the Middle East and overthrow nearly all Muslim governments (NYT53, R14, R107)—a goal that seems out of proportion with *al Qaeda’s* known resources. Similar sentiments have been voiced by previous territorially-conscious rebel groups (e.g. the IRA or the Tamil Tigers), and have been kept relatively contained through the use of political bargaining or martial force. Regardless which frame is employed, *al Qaeda* also remains ultimately dependent upon *bin Laden’s* status as a threat, rendering the group a less fear-inspiring figure.

In contrast, the fight against *perpetrators or general terrorists* is a cosmic struggle of good versus evil that has played itself out through selected representatives, of which America has proven itself the weaker. Terrorist acts are more than a violation of the rules of civility, they are part of a timeless struggle for the fabric of civilization and the path of righteousness. The participants are not social misfits or Italian-style mobsters, but inhuman, cold-blooded killers and fanatics (WP55, AP22, AP55, DTT7, R39), cruel beings “eager to kill” innocents (NYT52) and depraved in ways that *al Qaeda*, for all of its bluster, fails to match. The world they inhabit, for
certainly such evil cannot be a product of our own, is a “viper’s nest” (NYT95) of cruelty, a “netherworld” (WP79) that permits the terrorists to “loom out of the mist and vanish again” (DTT17). Able to commence “the end of the world” (NYT18) and bring about divine intervention in the form of a “cataclysmic blow over which mortals have no control” (WP22) or “the arrival of Satan” (WP48, AP55), these phantasms are deadly adversaries with otherworldly powers to match. Organized, educated, and equipped with both worldly and divine powers they have “joined the US in battle” (NYT52) with abilities the superpower lacks and has no means of acquiring; the punishing arm of the law has no jurisdiction over this confrontation. The collateral damage of losing to such an enemy is not merely another bombed embassy but the loss of a way of life, civilization, and humanity itself (NYT52, AP95, G9)—the advent of “new dark age” (DTT11). The perpetrators pose a threat to the very souls of all who oppose them and will perpetuate the battle eternal; America is outgunned by forces it cannot match, sucked into “a race [with] no finish line” (WP65); defeat, though perhaps not immediate, is inevitable.
D. Case Study: 2008 Danish Embassy Bombing

What follows is a summary of the identity narratives surrounding the 2008 Danish Embassy bombing; given the unchanging nature of the discourse (and to save the reader from repetition), presentation of the four investigative phases was condensed to (1) pre-claims of responsibility (“no claims of responsibility”), and (2) post-claims of responsibility (“unverifiable claims of responsibility,” “tentative arrest of suspects,” and “formal arrest/indictment of suspects”).

Pre-Claims of Responsibility

Unlike the 1998 Embassy bombings, al Qaeda is identified as the primary suspect immediately following the 2008 attack (NYT116, AP125, AP126, AP131, DTT21, G25, G26, N4). The media retraces the group’s recent threats of violence (WP85, DTT20, DTT21, N4) and its “extensive justification” of revenge against Danish diplomatic facilities and personnel (AP125, AP126, AP131). Given the well-documented nature of these threats, the potential involvement of al Qaeda is assumed to be unquestionable (AP127, AP131, DTT21, N4); consequently, it is from this group that the perpetrators and general terrorists of the discourse borrow much of their narrative attributes. All three actors share a common geographic origin in Pakistan’s tribal areas (NYT116), fury over Denmark’s publication of the controversial Mohammed cartoons (AP131), and rely upon suicide bomber tactics (NYT117, AP131, DTT20, R128). It is significant that unlike the unclaimed attack narrative (in which unnamed terrorist actors are divorced from named counterparts), al Qaeda acts as a filter of understanding that presumes whomever is ultimately found responsible for the operation will be similarly well-understood by requisite authorities and thus able be subdued with existing tactics.
Consequently, the motivations attributed to perpetrators are reminiscent of al Qaeda’s ambitions to bring about the fall of Western governments and sympathetic regional autocrats. The bombers are motivated by a desire to avenge Denmark’s offense against the Muslim nation and to cripple Pakistan’s foreign relations and isolate its government (NYT116, WP84, DTT20, R130, CP2). Unlike the epic conflict between bombers and targets in the 1998 Embassy narratives, any truly damaging repercussions are confined to the target countries rather than the entirety of the human race, supposing both a limit to the perpetrators’ power as well as their desire to cause harm.

Tentative initial suggestions of a superhuman perpetrator—bombers that can “slip through” new security measures using mysteriously-acquired “inside knowledge,” leaving authorities unable to “explain at this moment why this is possible” (NYT116, NYT117)—are dispelled within the very same articles. Hardly otherworldly beings, perpetrators are simply skilled criminals who have taken advantage of Pakistan’s multitude of security failures. Though a sovereign nation in its own right, Pakistan is depicted as a struggling post-colonial society, an abortive younger brother attempting to emulate the thriving governmental models of Western nations whose patronizing assistance (NYT116) cannot compensate for domestic failures. Overcoming the security precautions of such a weakling is hardly a great accomplishment, particularly given the deterioration in the national security situation since 2007 (N2, N3, N5) and the provocation of terrorist activities by domestic policymakers (NYT116, NYT117, WP84, R128). Against the advice of Western allies (NYT116, AP125), the inexperienced and unstable Pakistani Government (NYT116, AP125, DTT21, DTT22, R130, R132) entreated radical militants with peace agreements such mendacious persons could not be expected to uphold (NYT116, NYT117, AP125, G25, DTT20, DTT21, R128, R133). Under such circumstances, overtures to “illogical
fanatics” could only result in such an attack (N4, N5). Though talented, the perpetrators are not possessed of unnatural skills; rather, the Danes “have simply trusted the Pakistani’s ability to protect us too much” (AP131).

Though the recipient of the attack, it was furthermore Denmark’s foreign policy choices that constituted the nation as a knowing target for terrorist violence, particularly through the reprinting of the controversial Mohammed cartoons (NYT116, NYT117, AP125, AP126, AP127, G25, G26, DTT20, R128, N4). Indeed, the state had already invested in precautionary measures and relocated foreign workers from the embassy structure (WP84, G24, G25, G26, N4), negating the bombers’ ability to render the desired lethal blow. Unapologetic for its presumed offense, Denmark strongly condemns the violence, and its subsequent refusal to capitulate wins it the admiration of the larger international community (NYT116, AP126, DTT21, R128, CP2).

Likewise, the attack was not unpredictable (N5) but rather part of an ongoing campaign against resident foreigners in Pakistan following the Government’s peace deals with Islamic militants (AP125, AP126, G25, G26, DTT21). Certain to increase unease in the foreign community (NYT116, NYT117, R130) and prompting the closure of the Norwegian and Swedish embassies (AP125, AP126, DTT20, DTT21, R130, CP2, N1), the retaliatory measures in response to blasphemous pictures (DTT20, DTT21, R128) constitute an “open and shut case of jihadis fulfilling an open-ended threat to attack the embassy” (R130). An Islamist suicide attack against Western targets on Pakistani soil is hardly unprecedented or unusual (R130, N1, N3, N4, N5); in fact, one might consider this embassy bombing odd given its realization in spite of its predictability.
Post-Claims of Responsibility

In spite of *al Qaeda*’s claim of authorship, the post-claim discourse varies little from the previous narrative in which skilled (but not unusually so) *perpetrators* overcome the security measures of a failed government to seek revenge against a nation contemptuous of Muslim values—a trope easily recognizable from previous public dissections of *bin Laden*’s group. Here, *al Qaeda* involvement is logical given the group’s threat posturing over the publication of the Mohammed caricatures (NYT120) and oft-repeated oaths of revenge (NYT120, AP133, AP134, G27, R131, R132, CP6). Interestingly, the organization’s assurances of pending imminent attacks (NYT122, AP132, AP137, R131, R134, CP6, CP9, CP14) do not become speculative fodder for press officers given *al Qaeda*’s questionable ability to deliver such promises in the face of organizational disintegration. A crumbling guerrilla troop badly damaged by the American “fightback” in Iraq, even *al Qaeda* leaders are “starting to prepare their people for strategic failure” (G28). With one third of its command staff killed in combat (NYT122, G30, G31, G32), the group’s integrity is dubious; even now its attacks mostly function as propagandist slogans rather than crippling strikes (AP137, CP15). Given that *general terrorists* derive their attributed characteristics from the *al Qaeda* organization, such characterizations also call into question the threat potential of even unnamed terrorist actors (G30, G31).

Moreover, *al Qaeda*’s legitimacy as a vehicle for retribution on behalf of Muslim populations is jeopardized as the discourse of martyrdom (AP133, AP134, AP135) is overwhelmingly silenced by the condemnation of suicide tactics (NYT120, AP146, G27, G29, R131, R133, R134, CP9, CP12), which locates the act in the criminal rather than the divinely righteousness (Fierke 2009). The invocation of “suicide bombing” over “car bombing” not only locates political legitimacy on
the side of the targeted but also cultivates a moral superiority that delegitimizes the validity of grievance motivating the terrorists. In identifying *al Qaeda* as the bombers, the narrative establishes a model of virtuous victim versus depraved radical other, polarizing the liberal democratic West and an oppressive, backwards foe. The attacked nation consequently has no need to defend the legitimacy of its own actions given the contrast to the depraved methods of the terrorists.

Such an act of savagery is to be expected in a comparatively unprincipled country such as *Pakistan*, given its infantile and unstable system of governance (NYT118, AP132, AP134, G30, G31, R132) and repeated failure to improve security (WP86, AP133, AP134, AP135). The embassy bombing is the latest in a “wave of bombings” that has rocked the nation in preceding months (WP87) in response to authorities’ well-intentioned but naïve attempts to deal with insincere tribal militants (AP132, G31). Ironically, in what was once considered “one of the safest places in Pakistan” prior to these efforts, residents are now “afraid to come out” (G33). Continual comparisons of this degeneration in security imply that if the misguided Pakistani Government were willing to heed the advice of its more experienced and knowledgeable Western neighbors, such security could be easily restored.

Nor are the identities of the detained *suspects* of an unexpected nature, as they were already suspected in a string of previous bombings (AP138, N9) and have well-established links to top Taliban commanders in the Waziristan region (AP138). Consequently, both the operation and its authors were predictable and the atrocity therefore preventable; the scenario was not so much committed as *allowed* to happen, intimating that it could and should have been stopped.
Denmark itself was both an active and aware target, having identified (AP136) and prepared for the al Qaeda threat in advance (NYT120, AP133, R132, CP8, CP12, CP13) as its publications resulted in a “sharpened [militant] focus” on the country (AP137). In turn, the European nation’s blatantly unrepentant attitude (CP6, CP7) is interpreted by the international community as a strong defense of free speech in the face of adversity, rendering Denmark—to the consternation of al Qaeda leaders—the heroic figure. Given the clarity with which actors in this narrative assume their projected identities as well as the resolution presented by both the apprehension of the suspects and the recognition of feasible steps to prevent a similar future occurrence, the 2008 Danish Embassy bombing discourse leaves little to the imagination in terms of potential threats.
E. Case Study: 2000 USS Cole Bombing

What follows is a summary of the discourse surrounding the 2000 USS Cole bombing. Given that a claim of responsibility (though considered incredible) was issued immediately after the attack, analysis begins at the “tentative claims” phase. The discourse appears to closely match the pattern exhibited by the 1998 US Embassy bombings, in that the credibility of the target nation and its allies is undermined by all-knowing nameless opponents who form a terrifying counterpart to the comparatively normalized and understood al Qaeda organization and its agents.

Tentative Claims of Responsibility

Authorities immediately reject existing claims as false (NYT127, R159, R162, R163) postulating that organizations are “expected to claim the attack as their own” and thus implying that none are responsible (R140, R141): “traditionally, those who run around claiming credit are not the ones doing these things” (WP95). The pool of potential perpetrators is consequently without limit; there is no shortage of suspects (NYT126, NYT134, WP95, R144, R165), who may include in their ranks collaborating terrorist groups (WP95), hostile governments, or a combination of the two (R165).

Safe in their camouflage of confusion, perpetrators possess abnormal abilities to render themselves inconspicuous by “disappearing” and “spiriting” themselves about (NYT140, WP114, G35); it is unclear how they managed to avoid watchful US Navy lookouts while circling the USS Cole in an otherwise empty harbor (NYT123, NYT125, NYT138, NYT142, WP90, WP95, AP159, DTT25). Infiltrating the safe haven of their victims (WP94, WP96,
WP116), *perpetrators* are “snakes in the grass” (WP95) able to “sneak up” (NYT140, WP89, AP171, AP173) and wreak “crippling” blows against their targets (NYT127, NYT135, WP89, AP159).

Such stealth is further enhanced by strategic intelligence; prepared in the art of explosives (NYT125, AP150, AP155), *perpetrators* are well-organized, well-supplied, and endowed with excellent connections (NYT125, WP95, AP147, AP154, AP157, AP167) that allow for the use of weaponry “more sophisticated [and difficult to obtain] than that used by most terrorist organizations” (NYT132, NYT138, G25). The bombers possessed advanced knowing of the *USS Cole’s* docking schedule, an intimate understanding of refueling procedures (NYT125, WP116, AP142), and foiled security officers through the use of classified information (NYT123, WP90, WP94, WP96, AP148, AP150, AP187, AP188, DTT25, R141, R144). Their prowess is unprecedented—“I can’t think of a major terrorist operation that has involved, essentially, hardware of that magnitude” (NYT132)—and unstoppable (R157, R138).

Plotted months in advance and scrupulously organized (NYT123, G35, R165), the attack was “so meticulously disguised and carried out…that there was little the crew could have done to stop it” (NYT126, NYT127); it “really stands out” from the pantheon of terrorist attacks (NYT125). Though of “despicable” and “cowardly” origins (NYT123, WP88, AP139, AP150, R137, R143), the level of sophistication inherent to the attack (NYT126, WP114, AP148, R168) is evidence it was “not put together in a garage overnight” (DTT23). The magnitude of this expert achievement is astonishing; the *USS Cole* is one of the world’s newest and most advanced warships (NYT138, NYT140, WP89, AP139, AP142, AP147, G34, DTT23, R135, R143, R158), a ship that was
“built to fight” (AP146) and protect “itself and others against simultaneous attack by planes, missiles, and ships” (R137). Not only was this colossus helpless against the “maritime equivalent of a car bomb” (NYT123), but said skiff ravaged and absolutely devastated the *USS Cole* (AP104, AP162, AP163, DTT23, R161, R169) with a force so powerful it sent “terrified Aden residents fleeing into the streets” thinking the city had been “hit by an earthquake” (R135, R137).

Confronted by an unknown and seemingly all-powerful adversary, the *United States* attempts to bolster its confidence by relying on tried-and-true military strength. An “unrivaled military superpower” endowed with “precision guided weapons, well trained, troops, and global reach,” it will bring the attackers to justice; indeed, it is because the US is “so powerful and [has] such good equipment that [its] enemies see that they have to use asymmetric methods” (NYT125). Somber reassurances of imminent arrests (NYT123, WP88, AP139, AP140, G34, R135) degenerate into “strongman” vows of “American justice” (NYT133) and vengeance (WP111, AP175); violent retaliation to “strike a hard blow” is both likely and effective (NYT123, AP150, AP155, R154). Reasserting its place in the global hierarchy, the *United States* commits itself again to the role of noble protector, “standing guard for peace, for freedom or stability…around the world” (NYT129, NYT133, G35, R138, R144): the *USS Cole* “not only protects the United States citizens, it protects the rest of the world as well” (AP186).13

The promised retaliation is imminent, given that the joint investigation between the *United States* and *Yemen* is progressing rapidly thanks to “superb support” from Yemen (NYT129, NYT131, WP93, WP112).

---

13 Rare but contrasting references within this section hints at a world-weary, vulnerable superpower (NYT123, NYT133, WP93, WP112).
The investigation has advanced a “quantum leap” (AP170, AP174) and progress is “better than we could have thought” (WP116, R160, R161). Yet America had only previously averted such tragedy by luck (WP89), visiting Aden two dozen times despite a lack of personnel security checks and Yemen’s porous coastline (NYT135). For its part, ally Yemen is characterized as savage and backwards, a pre-temporal “other.” Dangerous and volatile (NYT129, WP96), it is an “exotic land with reputation for violence” (AP144, AP159) and a “place to make Westerners wary” (NYT139). The gnarled and dilapidated downtown facades, once elegant reminders of British imperial rule (WP106), frame a nation now ruled by a shadowy secret police whose efficiency results from torture (NYT131, WP107). Lacking a true centralized government (NYT129, NYT135, WP90, WP95), the failed state (NYT129) is fragmented and anarchic (WP95, AP144, AP147, R140, R153).

The Yemeni pseudo-state is particularly unfortunate given that it is “teeming” with terrorists (NYT123, NYT129, WP90, WP102, WP112, DTT24, DTT25, R140, R149), a “hotbed of crazies” (WP94): “next to Sudan and Iran, [it] has one of the highest concentrations of terrorist camps in the world” (AP155). With its “lax and inefficient” security (WP90, WP96), its “crumpled-looking Yemeni colonels in khaki uniforms” hardly compare to efficient American personnel with their “stiff salute[s] and immaculately tailored and crisply pressed [uniforms]” (NYT139). Yet the Yemeni Government denies this affliction (NYT123, WP90, WP95, AP139, AP142) and asserts that the incident was instead the product of an accident aboard the ship (NYT127, AP144, G34, R151), a position later reversed in the face of angry American protests (NYT131, AP167, AP168).
Even in Yemen, al Qaeda remains under the direct control of “[US] public enemy No. 1” (NYT131, NYT136, AP155, R144, R165, R167) and thus is of immediate suspicion (AP172, AP173, AP174). Accused by the Americans for past terrorist activities (NYT136, AP155, AP157, R159, R167), Osama bin Laden himself is frustratingly untouchable, “surviving any strike against him” (WP107, AP171, AP172, AP174) and taunting that “the dream to kill [him] will never be completed” (AP177). However, it is the unidentified terrorist that here poses an even greater danger. An ever-present threat (WP101) and unavoidable risk (NYT125), these faceless specters “creep…ever closer” to the shores of a people unable to flee (WP101, R149). Savvy and impossible to pin down, they continually probe for America’s “Achilles’ heel” (NYT125) and new ways to carry out attacks (WP112, R149, R164): “where you shut them down…they go back and cook up a new way” (R164).

**Tentative Arrest of Suspects**

The arrest of unremarkable suspects during this phase results in an imagined perpetrator who excels far beyond the normal criminal. Organized (AP208) and well-financed (NYT146), perpetrators are highly disciplined in maintaining years of “airtight operational security” (NYT143, NYT149, NYT161, AP207, G36, R174, R176). Determined to attack until successful (NYT146, NYT149, AP215), these persons are more than “just two guys getting a week’s training in the mountains of Afghanistan” (WP131). Utilizing “technological savvy unknown in [Yemen]” (WP134), the level of professionalism inherent to the operation (NYT149, AP199, R172) identifies it as possibly of state support (WP131, WP134, AP208). As explosive material is available in only four nations (of which two are the US and Israel) (NYT146, NYT155), the bombing was obviously conducted by resourceful experts (NYT143, NYT161, AP199, AP213,
The resulting explosion compares to “David killing Goliath” (NYT146) in crippling one of the world’s most advanced combat ships (NYT159, WP132, AP131, AP202, R176, R177, R179) and delivering one of the “most violent and humiliating moments in the [US] Navy’s peacetime history” (NYT150).

In contrast to these polished figures, the arrested suspects are painfully conspicuous with thick Arab accents and foreign appearances (NYT151), Saudi Arabian-born Yemenis from bin Laden’s ancestral homeland (NYT159, NYT163, NYT164). Yet geography appears to be the only similarity between the al Qaeda leader and the detained, as the suspects are unskilled, requiring outside guidance (NYT161, WP121, AP210) and hardly capable of enacting a spectacle on the scale of the USS Cole.

In comparison to the viciousness of nameless terrorism (NYT146, WP128, AP212), Osama bin Laden is typified as a normalized threat. Commander of a foreign army and architect of a global anti-American crusade (NYT144, NYT146, NYT159), the Saudi is linked to the deadliest terrorist acts of the past decade (WP125) and poses a continued threat to the American people (WP137, R175). His excellent recruiting methods (NYT164, WP121, AP196, G36) have propelled bin Laden to the top of the FBI’s “most wanted” list (NYT143, NYT163, AP210).

Its arrests proving unsatisfying, the United States tries instead to reinforce its commitment (NYT149, WP135, WP137, AP198, AP212) and role as “unbowed” superpower (NYT146, NYT150, WP128) vital to continued global security (NYT165, AP214). A “world of stunning technical sophistication and global reach barely imaginable amid the unchanging rhythms and
beliefs of life [in Yemen]” (NYT159), American boasts still fail to disguise that the mighty superpower was “humbled by two Arab men in a motorized skiff” (NYT146) and limped away (NYT150), dependent upon allies for continued safety (NYT164).

Damaged American credibility also dampens investigative progress and casts the attack as the fault of political ambition. US officials had played down “two stark warnings” issued prior to the bombing (NYT143), and the Pentagon’s top intelligence expert on regional terrorist threats resigned immediately claiming safety was sacrificed for stronger bilateral ties (NYT145, WP120, AP191, R170). Furthermore, it is revealed that “no conclusive progress” has actually been made in locating the conspirators, which may now take “weeks, months, or even longer” (NYT150). The “bogged down” state of the investigation (NYT149, AP203, AP209) is heavily influenced by Yemeni resistance, as the United States can “muster expertise and sophistication far beyond what is possible in Yemen” (NYT149, WP119, WP121, WP126) but has had the “door slammed on them” (NYT153, NYT160, AP130, R175).

Initial qualms regarding Yemeni stability and integrity are confirmed by accusations of duplicity. The country, given its savagery (NYT143, NYT151), human rights abuses (NYT148, WP125), lawlessness (NYT159, NYT164) and deluge of terrorist inhabitants (NYT148, NYT150, NYT154, WP120), is incapable of conducting a first-rate investigation. Yemen assumes a “haphazard” approach to the matter of criminal investigations (NYT153, WP119, WP199) and deliberately hinders the investigation for fear of incriminating government employees (NYT162, AP210, AP234); two of the capital’s most influential people were one-time allies of Osama bin Laden (NYT164). Police obscure “crucial evidence” (NYT153) and block FBI involvement
(NYT148, NYT149) with a maliciousness mirrored by the mass public, who express “a halting, half-expressed sense of astonishment, sometimes of satisfaction and even pleasure” at the attack (NYT146): “a few men pointed at [the crippled destroyer] and laughed. Women draped in chadors watching from windows and balconies shouted that the sight made them happy” (AP201). *USS Cole* crewmembers accuse harbor workers of acting suspiciously on the morning of the bombing (WP132), implying a pervasive and far-reaching conspiracy.

**Formal Arrest/Indictment of Suspects**

The final stages of the discourse capture a barbaric failed state and its much diminished superpower ally, the threat against whom remains continues to thrive and which is incomparable to normalized threats such as that posed by *al Qaeda* and its minions. As in the case of the 1998 US Embassy bombings, media characterization of *suspects* builds upon a previous discourse of unsuitability that results in detainees’ de facto exoneration. The arrested are but henchmen (NYT176) acting on the command of others (AP222, AP225), victims of circumstance that hail from “frequently persecuted” Ismaili Muslim areas (NYT168) and who are unable to gain a fair trial in a country where defendants are denied lawyers and judges are swayed by bribes or government pressure (AP225). Even prime *suspect* Muhammad Omar al-Harazi, though admittedly a potential “main plotter” (NYT166, NYT169), obtained his skills by training at one of *Osama bin Laden’s* many terrorist camps (NYT168, NYT169, NYT174). The fact that he is party to an organization “controlled by” *bin Laden* (NYT166, WP138) and his actions dictated by the Saudi exile (NYT177, DTT26) renders al-Harazi’s guilt not entirely of his own making.
Moreover, despite the detainment of suspects, perpetrators continue to exist as “clever, committed terrorists” able to overcome our security to commit unprecedented atrocities (NYT172, AP223, AP224, R183); they are “predators who will always search and look for weaknesses” (AP229, AP230). Consequently, as the apprehension of suspects has not notably decreased the danger facing the United States, the nation is stripped of its role as global protector and superpower. Evidence comes to light that the military of which American authorities had boasted so confidently was partially responsible for the attack’s success. Captain and crew of the USS Cole failed to follow at least 30 of 62 security procedures prior to the incident (NYT167, WP138, WP141, WP142), and the lack of timely intelligence, judgment, or coordinated strategy (NYT170, NYT173, AP220) criminalizes the entire chain of command (AP229, AP230, R185).

Furthermore, early investigative breakthroughs have petered out, leaving investigators with circumstantial evidence (NYT174) incapable even of assigning blame to bin Laden (NYT166, NYT177, WP138, AP232, R182, R183). Yemeni refusal to widen the inquiry to include domestic Islamic groups (R188) has confounded progress, while its authorities continue to frustrate FBI efforts (AP218): “much of the way the Yemenis have conducted the investigation has been troubling” (NYT176). Given its marginal system of governance and plethora of terrorist organizations (WP138), the Yemeni Government has “clamped down hard in the one place it could – Sana’a International Airport” (WP153). Unable to guarantee the safety of its investigators, America is forced to evacuate them (WP147, WP149) in yet another hasty retreat.

In direct contrast is the evermore statesmanlike Osama bin Laden, an icon Arab leaders cannot ignore (NYT169) and possessed of his “own Arab kingdom in southern Afghanistan” (WP149).
Untouchable (NYT176) and sovereign (NYT176, AP222, DTT26), bin Laden and his foreign allies (WP145) “clearly [have] the US military on edge” (WP148). Capable of transnational operations (NYT166, AP231), the Saudi’s power stems from singular control over the al Qaeda organization (NYT177, DTT26). General terrorists, however, pose a “pervasive and enduring threat” to America (AP224, R183, R185) that is more dangerous (NYT173) and encompasses the globe (NYT166). Such actors are at this very moment “plotting and conniving…to bring destruction” among American forces (R185) and are all the more terrifying given their lack of such an icon or controller such as bin Laden. What results is a superpower unable to guarantee even the safety of its own citizens pitted against an identified enemy whose minions are exonerated as well as an unidentified enemy who grows evermore dangerous but whose identification is blocked by the machinations of a scheming, duplicitous ally.
F. Case Study: 2000 Aqaba Rocket Bombings

What follows is a summary of the discourse surrounding the 2005 Aqaba rocket bombings. Given that a claim of responsibility (though considered incredible) was issued immediately following the attacks, analysis begins at the “tentative claims” phase. Deviating little throughout the course of the investigation, the discourse establishes the normalcy of the threat (a contagion of existing insurgencies) as well as the competence of Jordanian and American law enforcement in arresting those responsibility and thereby eliminating continued risk to both societies.

Tentative Claims of Responsibility

The investigation’s beginning phase is quick to establish the threat as unoriginal and quickly addressed by competent law enforcement officials. As with the 2000 USS Cole bombing, the discourse immediately invalidates a bid for responsibility by the Abdullah al-Azzam Brigades (G37, G38, G39, DTT27, DTT28, R197) given that many forums “that originally posted the claim eventually removed it, citing doubts about its source” (NYT178). Speculation abounds as to the identity of the attackers (WP154, AP235, AP236, DTT27), but it is ultimately agreed that the perpetrators failed in their attempt to strike American targets (WP154, AP235, AP237, G37) due to inadequate preparation (R189). Regardless of accuracy, the perpetrators’ ability to smuggle rockets into Jordan and launch them in one of the “most secured cities in the country” (NYT178) is a tribute to their dedication. Profaners of the Islamic faith, these persons have “distorted the image of Islam and Muslims” in order to obtain “a legitimate cover, to beautify [their] ugly acts” (AR1).
The targeting failure does not, however, impact the perceived gravity of the operation. The most serious attack against the US Navy since the *USS Cole* (NYT178, WP154, AP237, G38, G39, G40), it wrought a damaging blow to *Jordan’s* reputation for stability, as there “has not been such an attack on Jordanian soil in recent memory” (NYT178). The bombing heightened fears of militant contagion and raised fears that insurgents are “opening a new arena of combat” (NYT178, WP154) given that the attacks were highly coordinated (G38, G39, G40, R194) and utilized Soviet-designed battlefield weapons (AP236, G38, G39, G40). Note, however, that this characterization expresses not the establishment of a new threat but rather the spread of one with which both the *United States* and *Jordan* have significant experience. The narrow margin with which the rocket cleared the bow of the *USS Ashland* (WP154, AP236, AP237, G37, G39, DTT27, DTT28, R189) given the crude and inaccurate nature of the weapons (NYT178, WP154, G37, DTT27, R189, R193, R197), demonstrates the perpetrators’ competency.

The concerned protector, *United States* declared its intent to “always make every effort to support and defend [its] servicemen and women” (R189) and its “serious concern” over said incident (WP154). To ensure the safety of its crewmembers, American ships immediately departed the Aqaba port (NYT178) in a precautionary measure permitted by the trusted reliability of Jordanian investigators. *Jordan*, whose constancy in an unstable region is grounded in its security traditions (NYT178, AP235, G38, G39, DTT27), has long been a close American ally (AP235, R189) and pro-Western force within the region, even forming cooperative relations with Israel (AP235, R189, R192, R194). The likelihood that the rocket launch was a “one-off” attack (G38, G39) is high simply given the dedication of Jordanian law enforcement, who
initiated house to house searches and welcomed senior government officials on the ground within hours of the bombing (NYT178, R189).

**Tentative Arrest of Suspects**

Media sources continue to emphasize the skill of authorities in addressing the normal insurgent threat, as investigative findings testify to the accomplished *perpetrators*; in a “well coordinated military operation” (R199), the bombers knowledgeably selected an industrial area overlooking the harbor where their equipment would not be suspicious and chose to pose the attack early on the Muslim Sabbath when few people would be in the area to identify them (NYT179). They likely possess the ability to hit other targets (R200, JT1) in their quest to topple governments in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan (WP155). Yet regardless of proposed motivation, the criminals are without the support of a larger Muslim population (NYT179, R200); they “harm Islamic communities” while serving the “enemies of Islamic nations” (AR2). The bombers are “sinners,” even if their actions were committed “under the illusion they were serving religion” (AR3). Demonstration of investigative competency is evident in the detainment of several probable *suspects* (NYT179, WP155) affiliated with the *al Qaeda* organization (R199, R200).

However advanced, the attack is comparable to other recent bombings, including that of the *USS Cole* (NYT179) and the 2002 murder of an American diplomat (R199). The bombings themselves are significant not for their novelty but as a “grim reminder that Jordan is not immune” (NYT179, JT1) from the chaos encompassing its neighbors and as a symbol of the “potential damage such an act could inflict on [Jordan’s economy and security] in the long term” (R199, JT4). Given the significance of the attack to *Jordan*, the *United States* can comfortably
rely on its ally’s motivation and investigative prowess while it ensures the security of its own personnel (WP155, JT2). Washington’s closest Arab ally (WP155, R199) and preserver of the “true message of Islam” (NYT179), Jordan has a strong incentive to minimize its own vulnerability to attack (NYT179, R199, JT1): “for us in Jordan, the most serious element is that the assailants used Jordanian territory to mount the attacks and this has bearings on everything we stand for” (JT4). The irregularity of violent incidents is a product of police experience in keeping the “violence in neighboring Iraq and the West Bank at bay” (NYT179, R199, JT4). Jordanian security amounts to a civic and religious duty; not only are security services expected to “tackle the scourge of terrorism,” but defending the nation is “an act of worship” whose responsibility belongs to the entire society (JT1, AR2, AR3). Consequently, it is unthinkable that the bombers will not be brought to justice and existing security mechanisms strengthened.

**Formal Arrest/Indictment of Suspects**

The final phase of the investigation emphasizes the competence of the Jordanian authorities in doing exactly that, confirming the utility of existing counter-insurgency tactics while establishing the guilt of detainees and thus negating the possibility of future attack. With a history of thwarting terrorist attacks (including several planned within the past year) (NYT180, NYT181, AP243), it is a testament to law enforcement officials that the nation has “so far been spared major attacks on foreigners despite its proximity to Iraq and popularity as a tourist destination” (R201, R203, JT7). Likewise, prime bombing suspects were quickly arrested (NYT180, NYT181) given that authorities had predicted an imminent attack since 2004 (NYT180, AP238, AP240), and (though unable to prevent the operation) responded with alacrity. Investigative commitment and professionalism is underscored by Jordan’s role as an American ally (AP238,
AP240, AP243, AP244, R201, R202, R205) and the Arab army most closely allied to the West (DTT33), providing crucial logistics for the US-led War on Terror (R201, R204).

The suspects under arrest are worthy adversaries and thus their detainment dismisses the probability of more advanced “masterminds” harbored at large. Intelligent and well-trained (NYT180), the detainees are members of the al Qaeda organization, one of the “most ruthless and powerful insurgent groups” (AP240, AP244, DTT31). Regularly communicating their activities back to the sponsoring organization (NYT180, AP238, R201) the suspects formed a self-contained “militant cell” (AP247) consisting of a ringleader (R205) and his two sons (NYT180, AP238) that autonomously planned and executed the operation. Gripped by “devilish spirit[s]” (AP4), the accused knowingly set out to “kill civilians and terrorize peaceful people quite oblivious of their actions” (AR4, JT12), a far cry from the misguided and innocent suspects of the 2000 USS Cole bombing. The carefully orchestrated assault, which relied on “precise intelligence, weapons training and a smuggling run across the border form Iraq” (NYT180), posed the most serious threat to the US Navy since 2000 (AP238, AP239, AP240, AP244, AP247) and the most serious attack on American targets since the 2002 murder of diplomat Lawrence Foley (R201, R202, R203, R205). The terror cell readily identified and exploited a weak spot in Jordan’s security (NYT180, JT6), the narrow margin of their targeting failure (NYT81, NYT182, WP157, AP238, AP246, R205, JT5, JT6) a testament to their logistical skills and the value of their arrest by Jordanian law enforcement.
G. Case Study: 2004 Madrid Train Bombings

What follows is a summary of the discourse surrounding the 2004 Madrid train bombings. Given that a claim of responsibility (though considered incredible) was issued immediately following the attacks, analysis begins at the “tentative claims” phase of investigation. The Madrid discourse narrates the deterioration of powerful and credible target nations into progenitors of risk and human rights abuses in their efforts to confront an unprecedented and barbarous threat to which other insurgent groups cannot be compared.

Tentative Claims of Responsibility

The perpetrators of the Madrid attack are mysterious (AP254), unnamed and unidentifiable (NYT184, G42), though their identity may—if ever discovered—dramatically affect political events in Spain (R214, R218). The bombers possess an inhuman proclivity towards violence; “ruthless,” “indiscriminate,” and “clearly bent on killing as many civilians as possible” (NYT186, G25, DTT44, R208), normal humans could not have committed such an atrocity (G43). Morally bankrupt (AP249, AP254, R224), the terrorists are scum (NYT185), murderers (AP242, AP263, R213, R218, R224) capable of “butchery on a brutal scale” (DTT35, DTT43). The sheer brutality of the attack (AP249, AP256, DTT37) is a “crime against humanity” and God Himself (AP249, G41, EM1).

Yet the precision with which the attack was conducted (NYT184, NYT185, WP162, WP164, AP24, AP256, AP263, DTT41) birthed a “terrorist holocaust” to “define our age” (G41, DTT37), the likes of which are unprecedented (NYT184, WP163). This “monstrous assault on European democracy” (AP248, AP249, G45) has other European leaders scrambling to fortify their own
security against an unfamiliar threat (NYT184, AP251, AP262, DTT40) in an age of “global terror inflation” (G41, G46, DTT38, R209, R210). Nor can one protect against such attacks (G46, DTT40, DTT41): “I think it is well for the man in the street to realize that there is no power on earth that can protect him from being bombed. Whatever people may tell him, the bomber will always get through” (DTT39, DTT40).

The specter of this “new threat” results in a contrast between nationalist (represented by ETA) and Islamist terrorism. The former is “relatively easy to crack,” given that “its aims are concrete and well known and it has a political wing with whom to negotiate” (DTT39). Having never engaged in an atrocity comparable to the Madrid bombings (G41), ETA is morally salvageable and retains “some connection with the moral universe inhabited by the rest of us” (DTT39). Comparatively, the political agenda of the Islamists “has no coherence and their leaders have no desire to talk” (DTT39); dishonest and wily (NYT185, AP251, AP252, AP256, AP257, AP263, R210, R217), they resort to suicide tactics to achieve their aims (DTT40). This characterization also applies to bin Laden’s al Qaeda organization, which has “no shortage of states in Europe [that it] wants to hit” (DTT39, DTT40, R217) and in pursuit of such has infiltrated Spain’s Arab population since the early 1990s (NYT186, DTT38, DTT39).

In response to the attacks, Spain targets the well-known ETA (NYT186, WP164, AP248, G41, G42, DTT42, R217). Renowned for its resolute stand against terrorist organizations (AP249, AP252, AP256, G42, G46, R222, R223), the Aznar Government has moved “relentlessly against the terrorists” by employing “only the law but all of the law” (AP249, DTT44, R209) in a firm but legitimate crackdown. A leading US ally and staunch supporter of the War on Terror
Spain is “painfully familiar” and “wearily used to” the “tremors of terrorism” (NYT184, NYT186, WP163, DTT45) and intimately familiar with anti-terrorist procedures (DTT37). Spanish police and intelligence services have been “honed by 34 years experience…and have the support of virtually every civilian” (NYT186, DTT34); they have not previously and will not now “give in to the oppressor to which [they have] never shown fear” (EM1).

In turn the United States offers sympathy and solidarity (WP164, AP248, AP252, AP263, G42, R223, R224), taking steps to review its own security measures (WP162, AP253) and cautioning against the hasty assignment of blame (NYT186, AP252). This prudence is particularly relevant given the traumatized and disoriented state of the European nation (AP248, G42, G43), who is “engulfed” with pain and fear and “submerged in grief” (NYT184, AP254, AP255, AP257, AP258, AP263, R214) and thus of questionable rationality and judgment.

Tentative Arrest of Suspects

As the investigation continues, the credibility of Spain and the United States is shaken as both nations begin to pose a risk to allies. This phase furthermore evokes a contrast between the criminal perpetrators/general terrorists who are beyond the reach of government forces and innocent suspects potentially hailing from the al Qaeda organization, against whom the West has won past victories. Despite the arrest of suspects, the reputation of the perpetrators builds itself to more incredible heights; mysterious, unidentified enemies (WP166, AP292, G47, DTT49, DTT83, R225) who may “still be out there on the offensive” (G75), the ingenious bombers devised a novel tactical shift (NYT210) in executing their attack (NYT210, WP171, R235). The
operation itself—the sheer scale of which necessitated months of planning, advanced technology, and local knowledge (WP182, G55, DTT60)—was tightly choreographed and complex (NYT188, NYT196, WP165, WP166, WP171, AP266, AP267). Enduring, hostile elements to freedom and democracy (DTT78, R259), the perpetrators are counter-terrorism officials’ “worst fear” (WP176, DTT83), political actors (WP172) who have “defeated the government” in a “clear-cut victory” for extremism (WP174, DTT57, DTT67, DTT68). The bombing raised the possibility of future terrorist machinations that would undermine the political systems of the free world (NYT203, WP180, G52, DTT51), throwing the Spanish election “wide open” (AP270, AP271, AP273, AP274) as the first operation to directly affect a Western electoral outcome (G52).

Murderers (G48, G51, DTT47, DTT49, DTT52, R225) and assassins (NYT188, WP167, AP264), perpetrators “have no heart” (R230) but will continue to kill for their own enjoyment (DTT87, R229). Comparatively, detained suspects are decent, friendly young men (NYT194, WP175, G54, G70, DTT80). They are entrepreneurial (NYT194, WP175, AP272, AP275, AP277) and not notably religious (NYT194, WP175, G70, DTT85); attractive, fashion-forward, and without the beard or clothing to mark them as Islamists (G54, G70, DTT85, R245, R246), the fun-loving bachelors are frequent disco patrons (NYT214, WP175, DTT93) who have been arrested unfairly (WP175). It is unthinkable such youths could have been involved in executing such brutality (AP272, AP275, AP277, G54); their “ability to maneuver on the fringes of scrutiny is hardly unique” (NYT210), and it is plausible the men are “totally innocent” (G53).
If any possibility of suspect involvement exists it is the fault of Spanish authorities, who acted in an enabling capacity. Zougam, the only truly plausible suspect of the detainees, was scrutinized by law and intelligence officials in France, Spain, and Morocco the previous year (NYT202, NYT210, WP171, AP275, G60) and was under surveillance for months before the attacks (NYT195, WP175, AP272, AP273); yet he was permitted to “consort with militant leaders” across Europe and Northern Africa (NYT210, AP288, DTT80) despite evidence of radicalism found in his apartment in 2001 (NYT207, NYT209, WP171, AP290, AP293, G60, DTT93). Collectively, the suspects appear incapable of independently executing the bombings and thus must be under the tutelage of an unidentified mastermind (AP312, AP313, AP314, DTT85); even in the case of Zougam, “leader and coordinator of the people allegedly implicated” does not “suggest that he was overall organizer of the attacks” (AP317, AP318).

It is impossible for authorities to connect such sheep-like figures with the “animal barbarism” that was “Madrid’s Guernica” (NYT191, NYT195, WP166, AP282, G47, DTT48, DTT60, R227, R229). An act of such hatred requires extraordinary resources—“an alliance with the Devil” (NYT192)—and gives rise to a new conceptualization of terrorism (NYT189, NYT195, NYT196, NYT200, WP166, WP183, AP276, DTT89, DTT94) that “alter[s] our lives forever” (NYT203, WP178, DTT91). More concerning is Western intelligence agencies’ inability to prevent future massacres (WP168, G53, G61, R234, R249): even “knowing your enemy doesn't always mean you can stop him from acting” (AP290). Not only can the authors of such attacks strike anytime, anywhere (AP280), but they will attack “whenever and however they can” (AP266). The perpetrators are impossible to appease (WP186, AP299) because they desire
nothing less than the complete destruction of Western society (NYT210, DTT51, DTT62, DTT90).

The characterization of al Qaeda evolves relative to this new understanding of the terrorist threat with a few significant differences. First, members remain beholden to Osama bin Laden and his political vision (NYT210, WP167, WP172, AP271, AP295, G64), which seeks not the extinction of the West but rather the toppling of particular governments (WP157, WP170, AP269, AP280, DTT50, DTT59). There is further debate as to al Qaeda’s organizational integrity, given the liquidation of its command structure and weakening recruiting power (WP193, AP279, G64 DTT74) despite the mutative ability that has allowed the network to survive until now (WP171, AP279). Most importantly, as compared to the general terrorist threat Western authorities have been successful in thwarting al Qaeda attacks for the past several years (R231); unfortunately, this also means that the organization cannot serve as a useful model for understanding the new “unstoppable” terrorists.

Spain’s counter-terrorism credentials diminish in light of its “unequivocal” accusation of ETA (NYT190, NYT191, WP171, G48, G49, DTT55, DTT67), the product of a deceitful political class (NYT195, NYT197, NYT201, WP166, WP181, AP268, G52, DTT48, DTT76, R233) who exploits tragedy for political gain (WP174). Yet with the Aznar Government’s electoral defeat, Spain’s reputation as a “tough partner that fights its corner hard” (G58) in an uncompromising stand against terrorism (NYT193, WP167, WP168, WP172, DTT57, R234, R236, R239) is compromised by political naivety (NYT199, NYT211, WP182, DTT77) and terrorist appeasement (WP184, AP294, G61, G62, DTT88). What was formerly a model of free and fair
elections was “overshadowed by terror bombings” (NYT203, NYT205, AP273, AP278, AP287) and the product of fear and anger rather than judicious deliberation (NYT215, AP277, AP286, AP287, AP294); Spain has the dubious honor of becoming the first Western power owing its political leadership to terrorists (AP293, G60, G64). The country caved more quickly than even the terrorists had anticipated, given that only one attack (rather than two or three) was required to instigate a change in policy (R244). This weakness is mirrored in a selfish citizenry, as Spaniards validate the use of terrorism and invite more violence for all nations (AP314, AP315, DTT90). Panicked, helpless, and incapable of rational judgment (NYT188, NYT191, WP167, WP170, AP264, G56, R261, R262), “the loudest, most raucous city in Europe [has grown] suddenly mute” (G47). The people’s chosen leadership is the “weak link” in the Iraq coalition (DTT68), a stark contrast to Bulgaria, America, Japan, and Britain, who protect international security in defiance of danger (AP280, AP281, DTT89, R251).

Moreover, the much-vaunted Spanish intelligence apparatus failed to act on previous warnings (NYT213, AP288, AP306), raising questions over the effectiveness of intelligence efforts (NYT202, WP174, AP290). Police admit they “would be lost” without the undetonated bomb mistakenly left by the attackers (EP4). This inefficiency is pervasive and longstanding, as the country has provided a regular transit route for al Qaeda (G3) and staging ground for the September 11th attacks (WP171).

As Spain poses a danger to its allies in its validation of terrorist strategy, the United States is similarly of questionable benefit to its international partners. Deferring to the Spanish Government’s claim of ETA culpability despite evidence to the contrary (NYT190, NYT198,
The United States increasingly poses a danger to its friends; any ally of the United States is automatically a target (AP287, AP289), sacrificed on behalf of a nation that does not account for the wishes or interests of others (NYT190, NYT191, NYT198, WP174, WP177). The US furthermore possesses vulnerabilities which terrorists “may choose to exploit” in a similar attack (NYT187, WP165) and must now fight the perception that acts of terror against American allies can sway nations from their alliance promises (NYT193, DTT68, R241).

**Formal Arrest of Suspects**

In the final investigative phase, Spain and the United States are ultimately determined too dangerous for their alliance partners, particularly given their accusation and detention of innocent men and the potency of an unidentified new terrorism to which the al Qaeda is incomparable. Media sources continue to shelter suspects from accusations levied against them, as the “truly dangerous” men have either perished or are yet to be identified and detained (M25). The former category includes the operational leader (NYT217, WP194, DTT100), who had been planning another grandiose attack (NYT219, NYT222, WP194, AP325, G76, G78): their “radicalism was total (...) feelings towards the West (...) of complete and absolute rejection” (EM18). The counterparts of the departed, shadowy masterminds who are yet an enigma (AP324 AP236, AP344, AP353) are of greater concern, the “pinnacle[s]” of a bombing outfit that has not yet been apprehended (EP15, EP28); media sources continue to question “where is the real mastermind of 11 March?” (M20). In comparison, those detained are good, friendly people (WP196, EM26, EP23), model neighbors (NYT220) who have never set foot in a mosque (EM8) or engaged in suspicious activities (WP196). Hardworking and successful (NYT220, WP196) the men are “fully Westernized, keen on football, fashion, drinking and hashish and their Spanish
girlfriends” (G76). They are foot soldiers (AP33), immigrants who were “recruited and brainwashed” (WP196, AP249, AP329) and bear childlike nicknames “like Mowgli, the boy in ‘The Jungle Book’” (AP329). These are not individuals capable of felling the government of a preeminent Western nation (WP199, WP200, AP363) and committing a hellish massacre with such flourish that it “shook Spain and the rest of Europe” (NYT224, NYT236, AP353, EM16).

The possibility of continued attacks is made more significant by references to the new and inexhaustible “wave” of terrorism that is “sweeping” Europe (NYT218, NYT220 NYT230, WP208): “whenever one terrorist gets arrested, one, two, three or more men will fill his space somewhere else” (NYT218). “Enemies of freedom” (AP330, AP331, AP332), this “militant underworld” (R265) whimsically selects targets (AP349, R278) and poses a catastrophic danger to the continent (AP352, EM15, EP15). The Free World’s attempts to dispel these actors are hampered by national rivalries, fragmented intelligence services, and bureaucratic obstacles, open borders, and an unwillingness to share intelligence (WP211, WP213), diminishing the likelihood of effective preventative action.

This shadowy menace stands in sharp contrast to al Qaeda, whose potency has been compromised by US retaliation (WP208, AP352). In his role as negotiator (NYT223, WP197, AP327, R268, EM19), Osama bin Laden plays on fears that Western governments’ pro-American policies place them at greater risk of attack (R267) (which does not require much reinforcement as the US is accomplishing this of its own volition). Paranoid of its own vulnerability, America has “not offered a solid piece of evidence to back its warnings” of impending doom (NYT241, AP234): it “can’t see clearly anymore” the threat of terrorism
(WP210). In its attempts to curb terrorist activity, the US has engaged in a “witch hunt” (WP201), cutting constitutional corners (NYT233) and violating individual rights (WP199, AP254) while rejecting evidence that proves suspect innocence (NYT235). Heeding an “arrest first and ask questions later” policy (NYT232, WP199, WP336, WP337, WP338) authorities detain a mild-mannered army veteran and Muslim convert who had not left America in over a decade and had never visited Spain (WP199, WP200, AP334, AP335, AP336, AP337, AP338, R273). Nor does America accept blame for its mistakes but rather faults the “inadequate efforts” of its allies (NYT233, NYT235, WP202, WP212, AP340, AP342), despite doubts raised by said countries early in the process (NYT233, NYT234, WP200, WP202, WP212, AP341).

Spain’s intelligence services are likewise willfully neglectful, as their observance of early warnings would have prevented the tragedy (NYT224, NYT226, WP207, AP347, G80, EP8). In a place where “al Qaeda operated ‘with ease’” and a “haven (…) for Islamic militants” (WP204, AP369), the attackers plotted under the very nose of a police force who claims to have been monitoring Islamic extremists for a decade (AP329); ironically, several of the suspects were paid police informants (EM7, EM8). Guided by “rage and impotence and fear” (NYT240, WP194) the politics of Spain have developed into emotional dictates (WP195) issued by a cowering government (NYT225, AP361) whose actions have even been chastised by the Iraqi Vice President (EP14). Unqualified and inexperienced (NYT239, WP197, AP328), the Government retreats even “more hastily than expected” (DTT106), demonstrating a “clear error of judgment” (EM12) that has cost Spain its international credibility (R266, R269, EM12). In accommodating the attackers and giving credence to the idea that terrorist violence inspires policy change, Spain has invited greater risk not only to its own society but also to the entirety of Europe.
**H. Case Study: 2005 London Train Bombings**

What follows is a summary of the discourse surrounding the 2005 London train bombings. Given that a claim of responsibility (though considered incredible) was issued immediately following the attacks, the analysis commences with the “tentative claims” phase of the investigation. The resulting narrative depicts the victimization of both *suspects* and a hysterical public at the hands of the *United Kingdom*, whose human rights abuses constitute a threat as potent as that of the unknown *perpetrators*, who pose a danger so unprecedented that it cannot be quelled by even as experienced a government as that of Britain.

*Tentative Claims of Responsibility*

The media reaction immediately following the bombings details the *United Kingdom*, a country with one of the world’s best counter-terrorism traditions and steadfast citizenry, pitted against a sophisticated evil that surpasses the known evil of *Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda* organization. Whether “lily whites” (locals with no police record) in the employ of “professionals from abroad,” (WP231), foreign fighters (G94), a homegrown group or sleeper cell (NYT257, NYT276, WP231, AP380, AP402), or an organization such as *al Qaeda* (DTT136, R295), the bombing *perpetrators* remain at large and will kill again (NYT248, NYT263, WP221, WP223, AP386); murderers who have “such evil in their hearts” do not care who they kill (NYT247, NYT248, AP377, G97, DTT141) and have no reservations over a repeat attempt (DTT138).

“Animals” deprived of “feelings or humanity” (R287), *perpetrators* seek to degrade the underpinning of Western society to something more uncivilized and base (NYT250, WP215, WP231, DTT117, DTT140). These persons are guilty of “slaughter irrespective of age, religion, [or] social status” (WP372, AP385, AP403, G98) and “devilish” crimes against “all nations and
(... civilised people everywhere” (NYT247, AP372, AP375, AP379, G92, G97, DTT120, R284, R287, R289, R290).

Despite its depravity, the refinement of the attack must be acknowledged. Painstaking, clever, and highly trained (WP231, AP383, AP404, G95, DTT129, DTT135), its authors made use of high explosives (AP401, AP402) to perpetuate explosions of such destructive magnitude the authorities have been unable to identify a single body (NYT247, AP400) from the nightmarish scenes of “blood and bodies [raining onto] the pavement” (NYT249, NYT262, WP215, WP223, WP226, WP229, G91, R282). Highly complex (NYT248, G88, DTT126, DTT127, R281), the operation was well-researched and almost certainly overseen by a trained professional (WP231, G98 AP380, R291).

Against such a threat, the British Government and public are fortunately well-experienced and prepared. The country boasts the “best antiterrorism tradition in Europe” (NYT247) and London the most “sophisticated security system in the world” (DTT123) regulated by security services that are “the envy of the policing world in relation to counter-terrorism” (WP225, DTT127). Backed by decades of experience combating IRA guerillas, their skills are finely honed and cutting-edge (NYT248, WP225, AP386, R281). Additionally, given the perceived inevitability of an attack (NYT267, DTT117, DTT121, R282), London had already rehearsed countless emergency drills that swung smoothly into action following the bombings (NYT245, NYT247, NYT249, G86, DTT118).
Given years of domestic terrorist activity the British public took the bombing in stride (NYT247, NYT249), exhibiting an impassivity (NYT245, G89, R293)—a “British steel” (AP393, DTT119, DTT120, R283)—that could have come only from one of the world’s most vigilant publics (NYT260). Londoners remain united in their determination to defend a way of life (NYT245, NYT247, AP372, AP375, G92, DTT117, DTT120) held “dear in this country and in other civilized nations throughout the world” (WP215). Past encounters with IRA bombers (NYT247, WP223, G96, DTT130) and the blitz of WWII German bombers (NYT255, WP226, AP384, AP387, AP381) have endowed the British public with a particular resilience to terror, as exhibited by the reaction of the average man and woman: “yes, you’ve tried it now bugger off. We’re not scared, no, you won’t change us. Even if we are scared, you can still bugger off…this is London. We’ve dealt with your sort before. Don’t try and pull this on us.” (DTT133).

Moreover, the United Kingdom shares an “unshakable” strategic and cultural alliance (NYT244, WP215, WP223, AP215, DTT119, R283) with the United States as the superpower’s “foremost ally” (NYT255). America is the “ultimate bulwark against world terrorism” (NYT244, WP217); an icon of liberty and freedom (NYT247, NYT251, AP215, AP373, AP378, R285), it has proven its potency by “smash[ing] up the…structure of al Qaeda pretty effectively” (DTT121). With such an ally—who has offered any assistance necessary (AP405, AP07)—to complement its own strengths, the United Kingdom cannot fail in the face of the terrorist threat.

Yet there is a key weakness in the United Kingdom’s seemingly flawless defensive front. The nation’s own culture of tolerance has turned it into a “Star Wars bar scene” for Islamic radicals (WP232), a breeding ground for terrorists (NYT267, WP232, AP405, DTT24) with
“Londonistan” as its capital (DTT134, R293). Nor is the British public quite as emotionally contained as the state might wish; the backlash against British Muslims begins almost immediately despite the absence of a perpetrator identity (G86, G97), and Prime Minister Blair is required to “convince his own people of their own fortitude—and it is not yet clear whether he has succeeded” (NYT245).

One of the recognizable figures of this “bar scene” is that of Osama bin Laden, who acts as both executive and recruiter for his cause (DTT141, R297). The Saudi has persuaded dozens of youth to join the jihad (WP224) and has prevailed upon British openness to establish a political and media office in London as early as 1994 (WP232). His forces, more ruthless and cruel than known domestic terrorist organizations (G86, G93, DTT131), seek extreme policy concessions (DTT141)—nothing that the British Government could deliver “even if it wanted to” (DTT122). A charismatic leader, bin Laden enlists vulnerable citizens (WP224, AP389) into his army to mount attacks alongside his chosen lieutenants (WP224). Al Qaeda, however, is a group of questionable ability; much of its hierarchy has either been captured or killed (NYT267, WP234, DTT121), and its ability to conduct transnational attacks is diminished (WP224, AP389, G94). Unlike the IRA, al Qaeda does not provide prior warning for its attacks and thus it is more difficult to authenticate its claims (G93).

The group’s ruthlessness (G86), however, pales in comparison to the threat posed by its unidentified comrades. These elusive terrorist actors are a cancer-like plague on society (NYT247, NYT266), a “scourge against humanity and against civilization” (AP378, R284, R286, R287) that must be combated by all nations. Mimicking the mutative capabilities of a
virus, the terrorist threat in Europe has undergone a transformation (NYT267) that renders it too widespread to be quarantined (G92, DTT121, DTT141) yet no known measures can defend against its poison (WP217, AP380, AP383, DTT132, DTT136): “there will always be one that slips through the net” (R291). Capable of striking “everywhere and against everyone” (DTT19, DTT123, R287), its triumph over the West is inevitable and future attacks a case of “when, not if” (AP402, AP404).

_Tentative Arrest of Suspects_

Following the unimpressive arrests of mule-like _suspects_, British security forces are seen as failing their frantic public in combating the masterful and depraved threat posed by the _perpetrators_, which may prove more than the European nation can handle. _Suspects_ detained by British security possess neither the technical nor the intellectual expertise to have autonomously instigated the bombings; they “may have blundered, blowing up the wrong target and accidentally killing [themselves]” (AP415, AP417), “mules” led to believe “they would be able to plant their devices and make their escape” (R300, R304). In comparison, _perpetrators_ as the true “faceless killers” (G107)—ironically also referred to as the “face of evil” (WP235)—are possessed of the ingenuity, deviousness, and technical expertise (NYT269, NYT273, NYT276, R304) to conduct such an operation (NYT273, WP233, DTT147). These mystery men willfully propagated a barbaric assault on the civilized world (WP233, WP236, AP408, G101, G102, R299) that even _al Qaeda_ supporters say “were the wrong thing to do” (AP409, DTT145), resulting in the worst attack since World War II (NYT269, NYT273), the worst ever seen by London (NYT277), and the “end of the world” (NYT280) for many.
Faced with the extraordinary, British security forces are proving unequal to the task. Unable to identify the enemy and thus incapable of taking definitive counteractions (NYT269, NYT280), police have “desperately” made “urgent plea[s]” to the public for leads (NYT269, WP233, DTT156). The nation has sought unprecedented investigative assistance from the United States and twenty-four European allies; European officials have been “struck by how little was known” and equally stunned at the “call for help” coming from the United Kingdom, which is regarded as having “access to more and better quality intelligence” than other European nations (NYT273).

The stoicism of the British public in “just getting on with it” (NYT274) given the familiarity of terrorist violence (WP236, G105, G107, R299, R300) has deteriorated; individuals are “reeling” and anxious (NYT269, NYT276, R302), perpetuating senseless violence against British Muslims based on suspicion of Islamist involvement (NYT275). This anxiety is not entirely unjustified (though the recrimination against innocents is unwarranted) given that 3,000 British-born or British-based individuals have passed through Osama bin Laden’s training camps, and approximately 200 home-grown terrorists “willing and able to slaughter innocents” reside in domestic territory (G101, G109).

As when confronted by the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century, the United States will stand with Britain to defeat terror using the “unstoppable power of freedom and democracy” (NYT278, WP236, R299). Yet the nature of the threat has changed; London’s “model [security] system” allowed the detonation of four explosive devices within city limits (NYT271). Even al Qaeda, whose patterns of activity are well-established, has developed the ability to “change its characteristics, recruitment patterns and mode of operations more swiftly than any other terrorist
group in history” (G145). These fungus-like terrorist cells (WP234) are not content to topple a single government but instead seek to “break the will of the world’s democracies” so as to remake the world “in their own grim image of tyranny” (WP236, AP408, G105, R299).

**Formal Arrest/Indictment of Suspects**

The aftermath of the bombings has transformed the *United Kingdom* into a nervous, trigger-happy weakling who seeks vengeance on British citizens and fails to confront those forces continuing to plot Western Civilization’s ruin in a new chapter of terrorism that has rendered *Osama bin Laden* and his *al Qaeda* organization irrelevant and outdated. The demise of the suspects during the conduct of the attack does not hamper attempts to displace blame for the incident, and may in face intensify such efforts. Multiple arguments are given in defense of the bombers’ innocence; they are “footsoldiers” (NYT337, WP249, WP252, AP421, AP429, AP430, G130, G132, DTT163, DTT167), “at the end of some kind of a totem pole” (AP422) and receiving orders, spiritual guidance and logistical support from an outside source (NYT296, DTT184). Given their youth (NYT332, AP420, AP486), the men may have been duped (NYT332, AP471, G135) or brainwashed (NYT304, AP444, AP419, DTT156, DTT158, DTT169, R305, R324) to be a “tool…of somebody else’s evil ideology” (AP445, G135); the “fragile minds” (WP296, DTT205, R331) of the youths could have belonged to “any of our children” (WP276). Under the influence of an evildoer, the young men were “perverted” and “groomed” to commit the atrocity (AP124, AP495, DTT227).

Besides lacking the intellectual fortitude to conduct such an event (NYT304, NYT346, WP243, R353), the suspects were perfectly normal, well-adjusted boys who enjoyed Elvis Presley songs
(NYT282) and sporting events (NYT290, NYT300, WP240, G116, R373). Sweet, gentle, and loving (NYT292, DTT153, DTT154), the “suicide bombers next door” (DTT169) were well-adjusted and “British to the core” (NYT281, NYT286, G237). Despite security camera evidence to the contrary, friends and relatives continue to protest the deceased’s innocence: “the idea that he was involved in terrorism or extremism is ridiculous” (WP240).\textsuperscript{14}

Regardless of authorship, the bombings signify an unprecedented “new chapter of terrorism” (NYT341, NYT345, G119) that will force “the outlines of life [in Europe to] change” (NYT283, R322), particularly given the novelty of suicide bombings in the region (NYT282, NYT364, WP238, WP252, AP421, G115, R305, R312). An “entirely new manifestation of terrorism” (NYT134) that has placed a strain on the “rules of engagement” (NYT295, NYT231, NYT328, G129), the meticulously planned attacks (NYT325, WP243, G211, R327) suggest experienced authors (R327) with the power to reconfigure reality (NYT339, NYT350, G212)\textsuperscript{15}, thereby eliminating the aforementioned suspects. Still at large (NYT292, WP242, AP421, AP422, AP451, G124, DTT196, DTT197), the suggested perpetrator “masterminds” (WP252, G120, DTT169) upset the certainty of identification as they make it impossible to “yet say who carried out the attack” (NYT320, NYT360, WP298). There may be a “third, fourth, fifth cell” (AP444, AP463), a “fifth man, or a sixth man, a seventh man” (WP242, AP423, AP428, G122), “would-be killers” who move freely throughout the region (G170, G172). Given the possibility of an

\textsuperscript{14} An occasional side narrative contradicts this innocence with retroactively applied evidence of radicalization, citing suspects’ increasingly unsociable behavior (NYT341, NYT256), religious zeal (NYT301), outrage over the War on Terror (DTT157), and collusion with Pakistani militants (NYT329, AP430). If indeed the true culprits, the men complete a “journey from perfect son to suicide bomber” (G237).

\textsuperscript{15} It is worthy to note here that a large part of these “new rules” refer to the shoot-to-kill policy, which is in fact not new but was employed against the IRA in previous years (R333).
impending strike, it is a “race against time” for security services (WP273, WP274, DTT202)—yet British intelligence has demonstrated itself incapable of pinpointing the bombers: “where are the plotters and planners? Where is the person with the expertise to trigger it? And is the capability still out there? It could be anywhere” (G114, DTT151).

These perpetrators are the compatriots of general terrorists, those who would destroy the social fabric of European societies (NYT284, NYT334, DTT235) with their “evil ideology” (NYT295, NYT304, WP252, AP445). A “new breed” of terrorist (NYT292, NYT345) who has lost even the support of publics in Muslim countries (NYT291, WP247, AP426), they constitute “a permanent threat from which nobody is safe” (NYT311, WP244, DTT240, R331) and one that does not abide by national boundaries (NYT298, NYT303, G144). Finding such individuals is “like looking for a needle in a haystack” (R373); they constitute a unique evil (DTT183, DTT227) with the power to conquer the human soul (AP427).

It is in comparison to these minions of iniquity that the figures of al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden are evaluated, and the latter are understandably found wanting. Once the premier sponsor of terrorism and “beloved sheik” (NYT356, NYT358), bin Laden’s popularity has “dropped significantly” in pivotal Muslim nations (WP247, AP426) despite the Saudi’s bids to demonstrate control over his organization (WP266, R367). Bin Laden has “fallen behind younger followers worldwide” (WP85), and his influence over his empire wanes as al Qaeda leadership opts to conserve their resources (NYT283, NYT320, DTT240). Despite expectations of a clear link to the group, the possibility of al Qaeda involvement has been either inconclusive (NYT325, NYT364) or flatly negated (NYT359, WP300).
With the involvement of the most familiar Islamist group invalidated, the United Kingdom’s record of counter-terrorism accomplishments becomes extraneous (NYT284, NYT300, NYT312, R326). The self-confidence of a jittery, nerves-on-edge public (NYT314, NYT328, WP280, AP458, AP459, A460) has “seesawed between bravado and bewilderment” (NYT313) as tested countermeasures proven irrelevant by both the novelty of the atrocity and the very demographics of the British citizenry: “almost all the people voicing that sentiment [“we’re children of the Blitz. This is nothing.”] hadn’t even been alive during World War II, much less survived the bombings” (NYT297). The exposure of British stoicism as myth is paralleled by revelations of security ineptitude over years of neglect. Despite a law enforcement body taken to be “more sophisticated than its [American] counterpart” (NYT231) and the “envy of the policing world in relation to counter-terrorism” (NYT347), and given that “no city in the Western world is better equipped to deter terrorist bombings,” the fact that two attacks were conducted in London dispels the myth of invincibility (NYT318). Instead the “model” police force must rely on the goodwill of other nations (NYT292, NYT298), “pleading (…) for help” in an unprecedented manner (NYT288, NYT316, NYT333, WP251, WP261, WP272, AP422). Having looked “the wrong way for years” (DTT173, DTT174), the gap of knowledge concerning Islamist terrorism among British law enforcement is “even bigger than was previously apparent” (AP458, G205). For instance, top intelligence authorities downgraded the threat level facing the nation less than a month before the bombings (NYT303, G146, R320), while bureaucratic ineptitude (AP432, AP448, DTT166, DTT228, DT229) allowed suspicious persons to flee the country (NYT292, NYT303, DTT195, DTT196).
The continuing possibility of attack has turned the United Kingdom into a terrifying police state, wherein law enforcement rivals its terrorist counterparts as the object of public fear. Overzealous (WP263), trigger happy (DTT186), and having crossed a “once-unthinkable line” in its anti-terrorist activities (NYT313, R331), policing has become a fixture of social anxiety (NYT319, G153). Guilty of barbaric murders and “execution style” slayings (WP268, WP271, DTT187), police action could kill more innocents and even children (G174) who are in the “wrong place [at the] wrong time” (NYT324, NYT326, AP469, G154, G155). The nation as a whole no longer pays credence to human rights norms, displaying increasing irritation with European rights legislation (NYT367) and British Muslims suffering a 600 percent increase in hate crimes in the bombing aftermath (NYT321, AP421, AP447, AP480, G117, G120). London has “become Belfast or Tel Aviv” (G151), and their Muslims population “not looked on as human beings” (R309).

The general public must also fear another impending terrorist attack (NYT284, NYT314, NYT229, AP453, G178, G236, R371, R376, R377). Threatened by a yet unidentified enemy (DTT200) with attacks that are unavoidable and unstoppable (NYT285, DTT235, G212, R240, R344), the threat could come from anywhere; even Britain’s own Muslim population “made clear they shared the same sense of otherness…[and] understood [the bombers’] anger” (NYT293, WP238, WP243). Despite having prevailed in previous circumstances (NYT283, G182, R323), Britain’s American ally also suffers from the same risk (NYT322, NYT349) and cannot take success for granted.
The Uniqueness of the 2005 London Bombings

Despite *al Qaeda*’s claim of responsibility, the 2005 London bombings exhibit patterns of discourse remarkably similar to those of unclaimed attacks. This deviation from the typical “claimed case” narrative is explainable for two reasons; first, as with any act of terrorist violence, the majority of media articles are issued in the first months pending the incident, followed by a decline in later weeks as interest wanes. In looking at the 2008 Danish Embassy bombing and the 2005 Aqaba rocket attacks, both were claimed within five days of the incident. The London bombings, in turn, remained without a credible claim of responsibility until *two months* after the bombings; furthermore, while the *al Qaeda* video claim was confirmed authentic, the alternating cut-and-paste video segments by al-Zawahiri and the suicide bombers generates ambiguity over the nature and extent of *al Qaeda*’s involvement (did the organization merely provide advisors and resources, or did it function in an active planning and participant capacity?). Consequently from July 7, 2005 until September 1, 2005, the London bombings were, de facto, an unclaimed act of violence. The discovery of unclaimed narrative patterns thus does not invalidate the distinction between claimed/unclaimed cases but rather confirms the disparity between the two types of attack.
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF NARRATIVE TRENDS ACROSS CASE STUDIES

What follows is an examination of the narrative trends evident in the unclaimed attack cases, as the element of anonymity is of primary interest; where relevant, the patterns have been contrasted against their claimed counterparts. Summarily, the tendency within unclaimed attacks to render the threatening and threatened indistinguishable destabilizes the mutually exclusive identities of civilized/barbaric, innocent/guilty, attacked/attacker that generally populate terrorist narratives, while at the same time confirming and reinforcing the possibility of harm. In contrast, claimed cases tend to reinforce existing identities and relationships\(^{16}\), validating assumptions inherent to the model of state/criminal actor confrontation. As compared to the increasingly radical tenor of unclaimed narratives, the claimed attack discourse sees little fluctuation, rendering the aforementioned relationships stable and thus of predictive value.

A. Civilization vs. Barbarism

Though the meaning of “civilization” has shifted according to the ideology of the dominant group, it has consistently represented a standard that determines the boundary of a particular, often European, community; “barbarism” is itself understood as a lack of “civilization” (Salter 1999, p.44-5). Both “barbarism” and “civilization” are defined by those characteristics attributed to “civilized” society; as “barbarism” is merely the absence of these features, the differentiation between “civilized” man and the “barbarian” relies on the continued preservation of these features, meaning that the “civilized” world is in constant peril of degeneration.

\(^{16}\) As discussed previously, the 2005 London bombing presents an exception to otherwise consistent claimed/unclaimed attack narrative tendencies and in the majority of instances tends to reflect unclaimed patterns.
“Barbarism” is gendered, impulsive, dishonest, dangerous, irrational and animalistic.

“Civilization” is grounded in secular rationalism, emotional and political stability, mastery of impulses, complexity in technology and science, and urban development. The world of the “civilized” further monopolizes moral and ethical superiority, the legitimacy of which forms the foundation of its institutions and systems of knowledge. Consequently, when “civilization” is undermined it is not simply a loss of trust in fellow individuals but a loss of faith in the system itself, the fundamental identity governing the social pact (Hosking, 2009, p.483). The “barbarian” thus functions as a site on which to project the “civilized” self, fashioning both a pre-temporal and inferior other. “Civilized” and “barbarous” identities are consequently mutually exclusive; the “civilized barbarian” does not exist, though there is debate over the degree of barbarism amongst “non-civilized” peoples (see Salter, 1999, p.53). We accept this duality as constant despite historical variation in standards of “civilized” and “barbaric” behavior.

As a general rule, terrorists fall into this latter category, anti-democratic hordes that wish to drag us “back into the dark ages” and are contemptuous of enlightened principles such as rule of law, the rules of war, and human rights. They perpetuate attacks against civilization, indicating they must be separate from such. The perpetrators of unclaimed attacks fit the same “barbarous” mold; animalistic, they are “snakes in the grass” (WP95), predators without feelings or humanity (WP142) that originate in vipers’ nests (NYT95) and cast tentacles across the globe (NYT55, WP82, DTT18). They are irrational actors, mad savages (AP282, G15, DTT62).

This narrative calls on a historic discourse that compels the enlightened to use the full force of their civilizing power to keep barbaric forces: their well-trained and superior troops (NYT7,
WP2, AP73, R245), force of law (DTT44), rationality and deliberation (WP12, AP3), stunning technological advancement (NYT123, WP126), worldly experience (WP122, AP349, R234, R245) and the very doctrine of freedom and liberty upon which their reputation rests (G35, R51, R162, EM1). Based upon established social doctrine, these strengths should easily overwhelm the crude savagery that is the only weapon available to the terrorist. Yet these same “barbarians” are not only animalistic but also masters of beasts. They “butcher” (G43, DTT35) and “slaughter” mindless animals (AP123, AP124), herding the unfortunate creatures through a “slaughterhouse” to their deaths (DTT43). These “dumb animals” are not lesser beings but rather “civilized man,” given that it is he who is the terrorist target. Such verbiage calls to mind the killing of animals for market and consumption, implying the “barbarians” are not only masters of the “civilized” but that “civilization” can be devoured as easily as a rack of lamb. The perpetrators are at once both masters of “civilization” as well as its destroyers.

In conquering “civilized man,” perpetrators are endowed not only with characteristics that have traditionally have distinguished “civilized society” but also the moral legitimacy accorded such values. Perpetrators are: (1) ingenious, using tactics unknown to “civilized man” that so overwhelm his existing resources that he is powerless against them; (2) advanced, capable of operations of a complexity and sophistication rivaling state-sponsored action; (3) deliberate and rational, with the foresight to plan coordinated, organized and rehearsed operations in a calm and calculating manner years in advance; (4) capable of utilizing sophisticated technology for intelligence gathering and bomb-making of a professional caliber; (5) dedicated, highly motivated with the discipline to undertake necessary training and follow through with the plan of attack. As these qualities embody the controlled, rational model of the “civilized” being, their
application to the terrorist undermines their role as icons of our own civilization, which indeed
the *perpetrators* appear to do in a very real material sense. *Perpetrators* “cripple” (WP114, 
AP163, DTT23, R159) the most advanced warship (NYT172, R135) of the world’s most
powerful military (AP188), mute Europe’s loudest, most raucous world capital (G47), and
demolish diplomatic enclaves, traditional symbols of Western power. Adding to this, in
committing the worst European atrocities since 1945 (NYT185, NYT195, AP277) the
*perpetrators* are paralleled with WWII era German society, arguably one of the most
academically and technologically advanced nations at the time. Bombers are even likened to
“David killing Goliath” (NYT146), casting them not only as Biblical heroes and divinely
selected sovereigns but subsequently implying that the opposition (here, the *United States*) is a
“savage, unenlightened pagan.” In a significant role reversal it is the terrorists, not the self-
proclaimed guardian of global freedom, who are bringing the international community out of
darkness into light.

This divinely-favored figure is fleshed out by phrases that attest to the *perpetrators’* ability to
negotiate celestial dealings; they can bring about the “end of the world” (NYT18), strike blows
beyond mortal control (WP22), and command the Devil’s appearance at will (NYT192, WP48,
AP55, AP84). These abilities are augmented by other “magical” talents; *perpetrators* “spirit”
themselves out of harm’s way (G35), confound investigators with their mysterious powers
(AP166, AP254, DTT83, R225), and are unable to be stopped by normal security measures
(AP2). These supernatural abilities endow the *perpetrators* with the means to force change in
Western societies, as following their attacks “nothing will be like before” (DTT37); such events
will “alter our lives forever” (WP178, DTT91) and “define our age and annotate its calendar” (G41).

In this way there is an unresolved tension between the perpetrators as pre-temporal, inferior others and perpetrators as divinely empowered superhumans. Ultimately, it is the “superior to self” other that dominates the narrative of each unclaimed attack. By casting the terrorists as not only having “civilized” characteristics but as perfecting them to an degree unattainable by “civilized man,” we leave open the possibility for civilization to degenerate into barbarism, stripped of those qualities which rendered it superior. Certainly this appears to be a self-fulfilling prophecy; Western societies are portrayed as incapable of objective judgment, panicked and guided by pain, anger, fear, and helplessness that translates into real political capital (NYT184, NYT191, WP29, WP100, WP170, AP34, AP254, AP255, AP258, AP263, G47, R214). Untrustworthy and deceitful (NYT190, WP46, WP166, G11, G52, DTT76, R82, R233), cowardly (AP315, DTT68, DTT90, R244), and imprudent (NYT143, WP120, AP220), the state lashes out with gratuitous violence (G11, R87, R96) that betrays the doctrine upon which rests its legitimacy as a free nation (NYT233, WP181, WP201, AP254).

Compared to the role reversal of unclaimed narratives, the perpetrators of claimed attacks are neither base animals nor divine beings but routine criminals. Certainly, an element of rumor initially circulates as to their possible mystical qualities; they are “phantoms” (AR1), able to slip past improved security measures in fortified cities (NYT178, NYT179) with a stealth that bewilders authorities (AP116). Yet as the narrative presence of the perpetrator figure extends only through the first two investigative phases (until the arrest of suspects), this speculation is
laid to rest by revealing seemingly inexplicable feats as the product of cleverness, solid planning, and insider knowledge. The terrorists’ experience in executing well-coordinated military operations (R199) is indicated by their selection of favorable attack conditions and exploitation of classified information (NYT117, NYT179, WP132, R179). Furthermore, these actors are hardly infallible; considerable emphasis is placed on errors within the conduct of the operation, despite their realization. In the case of the Danish Embassy bombings, perpetrators are highly illogical in attacking a building “merely named as an embassy with no Dane or Norwegian actually present” (N5) (staff had been previously evacuated). Those who ambushed the USS Cole “had not properly prepared for the attack” (R189) and consequently missed their targets (WP154, AP237, G37, R201).

Nor are the perpetrators, readily identified as followers of al Qaeda (NYT125, AP236, DTT27, DTT32, AR1) heroes to an earthly constituency; they instead attempt to create “a legitimate cover, to beautify [their] ugly acts” (AR1). Their actions identify them “as sinners” (AR2, AR3), just as any discussion of martyrdom (AP133, AP135, CP9) is eclipsed by references to suicide (NYT120, G27, R131, CP9, CP12). As Fierke (2009) notes, the distinction is significant because the depoliticized use of “suicide” terrorism “constitutes the agency of states vis a vis a moral deviant and an abject other who is outside politics and is thus the object of legitimate violence” rather than a “moral agent in pursuit of justice” (p.157). Consequently, rather than destabilizing assumed identities, claimed attack narratives tend to reinforce accepted understandings of good cop/bad criminal that tend to accompany popular crime discourse.
B. Attacked vs. Attacker: The Exoneration of Suspects

In addition to the continual threat of attack from forces unknown, the attacked state is unable to win a victory on the security front even given the arrest of suspects, as accompanying discourses exonerate said individuals of responsibility. This, in turn, criminalizes the attacked state for detaining “innocents” and further problematizes the exercise of moral authority by Western societies. The exculpation of detainees follows several models:

Suspects as lacking the intelligence and capability to conduct attacks

Unclaimed attack narratives frequently typify suspects as mentally deficient and thus requiring the assistance of some unnamed “mastermind” to conduct the operation, a tactic that introduces the possibility of a future atrocity. Suspects are naïve and simple (AP495), assisted by experts who assembled the explosive devices (WP121); perhaps duped into planting the bombs (G135), they may have accidentally caused the device to detonate (AP415, AP417). Their lack of independent agency is demonstrated in a particular case by the failure to remember to activate the pay-as-you-go mobile on an explosive that would have eliminated the trail of evidence (DTT85).

Suspects as soldiers under orders

Suspects are low-ranking “foot soldiers” (NYT337, WP249, AP253, AP421, G130, DTT163) having no knowledge of “the whole plan” (AP210, AP225, AP422, R300). Infantry of a stronger power, suspects exist at the end of the chain of command and are deprived of responsibility for following orders as their position mandates. Their status confers upon them the legitimacy due

\footnote{Note that this section is exceptional that it incorporates data from the 2005 London bombings, for which this particular technique was extraordinarily well-represented (refer to Footnote 14).}
the armed forces as well as applicable Geneva Rights, which renders their abuse at the hands of the attacked state even more grievous. Suspects’ actions are thus acts of war rather than civilian massacres, and it is the battlefield that is so often considered the scene of heroism. Indeed, the soldier in Western culture is a romantic and noble figure (particularly since the end of the Second World War) who takes suffering onto his own shoulders for the greater good. The self-sacrificing figure bears an uncomfortably close parallel to the “martyrdom” often referenced by terrorist compatriots.

**Suspects as originating from a position of persecution**

As if to explain their current predicament, suspects in unclaimed narratives are frequently typified as coming from backgrounds rife with discrimination. They are from religious minorities abused in countries such as Yemen (NYT168) or have been subject to torture during their detention (WP37, WP59), the authorities overseeing which threaten not only detainees’ personal security but also that of their families (WP59). It is not nations such as Pakistan or Sudan that so callously discard rights precedents but rather powers such as the United States and Spain whose very distinctiveness is based upon guarantees of freedom and liberty. Suspects are remanded even though their guilt is questionable and it is unlikely they would have been involved in planning or carrying out the attacks (WP175, AP272, AP275, AP277, G53, G54); they may be guilty only of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.
Suspects as brainwashed, childlike figures

Suspects are characterized as having ingenuous characteristics, whether immaturity, gullibility, or proclivity towards brainwashing. They are young, emotional, and ignorant (AP329, AP486), “just a kid” like any other (NYT332, WP276, AP420). Even the Madrid attack, which killed 191 people and wounded over 1800, was blamed on a man bearing a nickname from a childhood fable (AP329). Befitting their adolescent tendencies, the suspects are easily tricked and manipulated into participating (NYT204, NYT332, WP196, AP329, AP471, DTT156, R324) as “tools of someone else’s evil ideology” (AP445, G135). Moreover, these individuals have been “groom[ed] to carry out such evils” (WP253, AP444, AP468, AP469, DTT227). The use of terminology such as “grooming” to refer to suspects, given its frequent association with pedophilic discourse (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2009, p.82), further emphasizes the maltreated suspects and their inability to be held to account.

Suspects as Western and morally upstanding

The discourse of unclaimed attacks frequently portrays suspects not only as morally upstanding but also as fully Westernized. They are kind and cheerful, “not the type you’d think of as an Islamist” (G70). Quiet, model neighbors (NYT220) and devoted family men (WP66, R109), they are perfectly normal (NYT290, R373), infinitely likable and gentle individuals (NYT290, WP246, DTT153). To compound such flattering characterizations is the notion of suspects as subscribing to Western lifestyle and mannerisms. Materialistic, they are the first to embrace new fashions (DTT85) and high-end labels (R245, R246), socialites who are not “Islamic extremist[s] but (…) fun-loving figure[s] who liked discos, fast cars and drinking” (WP175, G76, DTT93).

\[18\] Refer to previous footnote.
Attractive (G70, R246) and hardworking (NYT194, WP175, AP275), suspects are interested in the “religion” of capitalism (G70, DTT85, EM8). Either married to or dating American and British women (DTT93, DTT95), most are “charmer[s] who like to flirt” (AP418) and “eye up girls” (G70).

In the rare instance that suspicious characteristics are ascribed to the detainees, the accusations generally center around one individual (e.g. Zougam or al-Harazi). Though perhaps not as comparatively blameless, their responsibility is waived by designating such persons as “low on the totem pole”; for instance, “leader and coordinator [of the bombing squad] does not suggest he was overall organizer of the attacks” (AP317, AP318). Furthermore, blame for the attack falls upon security services who failed to prevent the bombings. Such “main plotters” had been under surveillance for months (NYT195, WP175, AP272), known to intelligence officials around the world (NYT210, G60) and yet were permitted travel without restriction or dedicated surveillance (AP210, AP288, DTT80).

Note also that the portrayal of the “Western man” is not overly flattering. What emerges is that to be “Western” and thus “civilized” is to be obsessed with a partying lifestyle (including substance abuse), materialism, physical appearance, turning a profit, and crude objectification of the female as an object of sexual liberty. In turn, the “Islamist” is understood to be unattractive, disdainful of “fun,” never happy and disinclined to exhibit “neighborly” qualities. Yet to be an “Islamist” is also to possess self-restraint, a strong moral compass and a penchant to place stock not in Armani brands but in the tenacity of one’s familial bonds. When measured against “civilized”
principles, it is ironically the “Islamist”—unattractive “stick in the mud” though he may be—that embodies to a greater extent the controlled, moral actor underpinning “civilized” society.

The aforementioned depictions of suspects further destabilize the categories of terrorist/non-terrorist. Suspects are identified not by their criminal proclivities but by titles that the average individual shares—family men, children, sports lovers, Westerners. They are decent people who have been conned and otherwise taken advantage of based upon a lack of common sense and worldly experience. They are our neighbors, our children—any of us could be susceptible to such radicalism, much as anyone is susceptible to the addiction of drugs or alcohol. Consequently, attacked societies must now not only share the title of victimhood but also the possibility of blame as progenitors of the attackers.

Comparatively, suspects as detailed in claimed attacks are not exonerated of guilt but confirmed as mature criminal actors; the attacked state is thus validated as protector of the public good in preserving order and the rule of law, and its society remains unique in its victimhood. Suspects attack largely of their own initiative, demonstrating themselves cognizant and competent. Their affiliation with criminal groups such as al Qaeda (DTT31, R189, R198), in addition to extensive training and intelligence gathering (NYT180) render them skilled offenders. Despite a shared vision authored by Osama bin Laden, these actors are “in charge” of both designing and executing the attack (AP238, NYT180) and are thus morally culpable; gripped by “devilish spirit[s],” they knowingly murder innocents for their objectives (AR4). Moreover, their criminal activities are not limited to the current offense—the suspects have been previously involved in committing acts of terrorism (AP138, AP235, N9), compounding their guilt. Rather than unjust
imprisonment, the *attacked state* is to be lauded in removing such individuals from the vulnerable public sphere, which functions as recipient rather than producer of terrorist violence.

**C. Attacked vs. Attacker: The Attacked State and State Foil**

In the discourse of unclaimed attacks the *attacked state* is often cast not as mediator but as source of risk and a danger to its own society, a contradiction further emphasized by the previously discussed typifying of *suspect* figures. In such instances, the characterization of the *state foil* follows that of its criminalized ally and reinforces both as doer of harm.

*The state as attacker*

More than their claimed counterparts, unclaimed attacks tend to call into question not only the attacked nation’s myth of invincibility and capacity to defend its population but also its status as a member of the “civilized” world. Prior to the arrest of *suspects*, the *attacked state* constructs itself as a bastion of anti-terrorist sentiment, experienced and battle-ready. It is painfully familiar with threats of violence (NT184, NYT186, DTT45) given that its preeminent international standing solicits thousands annually (WP2, AP4). Consequently, police and intelligence apparatuses are alert and honed by years of deflecting antagonists (NYT186, DTT34); capitulation to or negotiation with such forces is unthinkable (R94, EM1). The *attacked state* has unrivaled power at its disposal with which to confront this new threat; in fact, it is because the country is so impregnable that its enemies were forced to use asymmetric tactics (NYT125).

Bold phraseology and action-oriented verbiage reinforce the nation’s willingness to employ this power and fulfill its protective obligation. Resolute, determined, and focused (WP162, AP252, G42, R217, R223), the *attacked state* is relentless and dismissive of compromise (DTT44,
R209). It is swift and decisive in its strategy (NYT123, G42), leaving no doubt that a hard blow to enemy forces will restore security and normalcy (AP150, R154).

Not only is the attacked state possessed of unlimited power and the resolve to employ it in full, but it also wields superior moral/ethical authority. The United States is the guardian of global stability and peace, world superpower and a lynchpin of “civilizing” force. Its resources not only protect its own citizens but the entirety of the free world, safeguarding the existence of freedom and democracy (AP186, G35, R4). Spain’s role as a democracy born of civil strife and staunch American ally confers credibility upon it in kind by extending the mantle of democratic repository.

As the singular perpetrator narrative divides into the duality of guilty perpetrator/innocent suspect, the discourse surrounding the attacked state likewise evolves. Media continues to laud the military superiority of the targeted nation, with its “stunning technological sophistication” deployed on a “barelyimaginable” scale that reaches to the corners of the earth (NYT159, NYT165). The attacked state remains steadfast, unquestionable in its ability to deliver justice (NYT149, WP128, WP167, WP168, G58). However, the discourse of the “new” or “extraordinary” terrorist threat erodes these claims; if an attack is truly novel, the current skill sets of security forces may not apply, rendering boasts of superiority severely diminished in importance.

Furthermore, the nation’s ability to adapt to the threat is plagued by weakness, the efficiency of its security apparatus called into question not only given the most recent attack but also due to
repeated intelligence failures. The *attacked state* as a secure fortress is undermined by evidence that terrorist actors may have used it as a regular transit point or staging ground (G53, WP171) or, in the case of the *USS Cole* bombing, infiltrated secure areas prior to the attack (WP132).

Having failed to heed others’ warnings and in the absence of essential intelligence, the *attacked state’s* attempts to “make up ground” are hasty and sloppy (WP181, DTT77).

The country’s moral authority is also challenged by its response to the attacks. The retaliation of the *attacked state* in meting out “rough justice” (WP52) is rash and gangster-like (the very phrase repeatedly employed to describe certain politicians) (DTT12, R102). Reluctant to admit mistakes, government figures mislead populations (NYT150, WP166, G49, DTT67) as the fearful society (NYT188, AP209, AP264, G56, R258) compromises its integrity as a rational actor and allows politics to become a product of emotionality rather than calculated deliberation (NYT215, AP277). Within this environment that the terrorist actor accumulates victories, forcing policy changes with seemingly trivial effort (NYT146, R244) that humble the great power (NYT146, DTT468).

During the final investigative phase the line between attacker and attacked is comprised and the *attacked state* fully established as a source of threat. Mendacious and unreliable (R269), the nation is beset by accusations of imperialist ambitions, humanitarian neglect and intentional denial of aid (NYT239, AP52, AP53, AP238) that undermine its legitimacy. It is further plagued by allegations of misleading or lying to its citizenry either through a political cover-up or by intentionally voicing inaccurate threat predictions. The erosion of human rights is further perpetuated by the *attacked state’s* repressive actions. The government is cast as the detainer of
innocents, with the specific abuses suffered by those arrested examined in great detail: secret trials of questionable fairness (R111), collusion with torture (NYT60), issuance of baseless accusations (WP201, DTT16) and the withholding of constitutional rights including failure to explain levied criminal charges (NYT85, NYT86). In the case of Spain, the Government even comparatively legitimizes certain nationalist terrorism through continual comparisons characterizing a few organizations as “more civilized” and legitimate than Islamist groups (G47, DTT60, DTT61, DTT94).¹⁹

In the employ of an oppressive state, the military—an extension and projection of state power—becomes a danger rather than protector. Not only does it invite greater risk to itself and others by failing to follow proper security procedure (WP138, AP229, R185) and committing severe lapses in judgment (NYT170, WP8, AP220, G80) but it strikes against innocent civilian targets (WP56, G19). More concerning, the ranks of the security forces actually produce terrorists who attack domestic targets (WP71, R125, EM7, EM8). As handler of the military, the attacked state is guided by rage, impotence, and fear (NYT240, WP194) of which consequent policy decisions are unpredictable and absurd. The trope of the attacked state as a beacon of Western enlightenment is dismantled as the country instigates humanitarian emergencies and propagates abuse against domestic and foreign populations. It is not only physical security that has been yielded to the terrorists (NYT225, EP14), but the state itself evolves into a source of cruelty that both produces and perpetuates abuse against terrorists and citizens alike, undermining the validity of its institutions, its role as victim, and its place within “civilized” society.

¹⁹ This tendency is also predominates in the discourse of the 2005 London bombings.
In the case of claimed attacks, the _attacked state_ continues to function as a moderator of threats, in part due to the affirmed guilt of the _suspects_; authorities can hardly be criticized for fulfilling their legal obligations. Concerned shepherd and people’s protector, the _attacked state_ takes precautionary measures to diminish the risk facing its citizens (WP84, AP127, DTT20). Despite the reality of the catastrophe, this effort reassures the population of the government’s benign commitment to make every effort in their defense, proof of which is the apprehension of the bombers themselves (WP154, AP238, R189). The _attacked state_ is indignant and forthright in issuing its condemnation (NYT116, AP127, AP236, R128) from a position of strength and moral supremacy (G25, G26). A powerful actor, it denies “victory” to terrorists by steadfastly maintaining a normal political agenda (AP126, DTT21, CP2, CP3, CP11). Moreover, the very actions suggested as possible provocations for the attacks (e.g. the publication of the controversial Mohammed cartoons) are depicted not as foolish or inflammatory but rather in defense of basic human freedoms (DTT20, CP6, CP7). Consequently, far from undermining its reputation as a lauded member of international society, the nation has demonstrated its loyalty and commitment to the doctrine of Western liberal order even under siege.

_The state foil as mirror_

Interestingly, the _state foil_ complements and to a great extent follows the characterization of the _attacked state_. For claimed attacks, the reputation of the _attacked state_ as virtuous defender remains unchallenged; under such circumstances, the _state foils_ (the United States, Jordan, and Pakistan) are portrayed as longtime (AP235, AP238, R202) and loyal allies (WP215) who supple the targeted nation with crucial support and services (R201, R204). Like their ally, the _state foils_ are bastions of freedom and anti-terrorist mandates (NYT244, AP279, DTT33, R285) with
established traditions of security (NYT179, JT4), stability (AP235, G38, DTT27), and extensive experience in thwarting terrorist plots (NYT181, AP243, G182, R323). Highly proficient both militarily and politically, these are nations who will stand with their allies to face down the most “murderous ideologies” (NYT178, NYT278, WP236); even Pakistan, who—though naively optimistic in its insurgent negotiations (NYT116, G26, R130)—has successfully conducted anti-terrorism operations (AP86, AP135) and proven themselves a key supporter of the War on Terror (AP133). The unwavering moral “good” of the state foil bolsters the attacked state’s own authority and its ability to confront danger with due recourse to the rule of law.

This is not so in the case of unclaimed attacks, where the state foil (the United States, Kenya, Tanzania, and Yemen) also see a shift from attacked to attacker. Initial offers of friendly support and resources (NYT4, WP2, WP164, AP248, G42, R5, R223) quickly degenerate as the state foil’s internal weaknesses compromise its efforts and render it a danger to the international community. The state foil is duplicitous in “assisting” the attacked state; it has obscured evidence (NYT153, AP210), hindered the investigation (NYT176), and may even have actively participated in the bombing conspiracy (WP132). Refusing to engage in supportive actions that may reveal its dishonesty, the state foil rejects blame for investigative errors (NYT235, WP212, AP342) and fails to examine suspicious persons within its own citizenry (NYT176, R188). The country furthermore musters hostile sentiment towards the attacked state; in the case of the US Embassy bombings, this resentment results in a lawsuit against the American Government, despite Kenya’s continual refusals to provide requested increases in security prior to the bombings: “why should we suffer on [the Americans’] behalf?” (NYT94, NYT95).
A growing danger to its alliance partners, the state foil is uncontrollable (WP153), unable to “see clearly” (WP210) and thus prone to vulnerabilities which “terrorists may choose to exploit” (NYT187, WP165). Consequently, its allies also become a target of terrorist actors that the state foil already harbors domestically (WP13, WP138, AP287, AP289). It cares little for the wishes or interests of its international partners (NYT198), who voice “alarm and despair” over its selfish wielding of global influence (WP174).

Finally, the state foil of the attacked state-turned-attacker is also an uncivilized nation, cutting constitutional corners (NYT233) and violating the rights of its population (WP199, AP254). A web of “bureaucracy, inefficiency, and corruption” (R45), it is prone to arbitrary torture (AP125), chaos, civil war (NYT151), lawlessness (NYT159), “witch hunts” (WP201) and an over eagerness to convict (NYT235). The state foil mirror the reputation for cruelty introduced by the attacked state’s newfound pariah status and further diminishes confidence in the administration of justice.

D. Inability to Demarcate Relevant Information

Unclaimed attack narratives exhibit a tendency to render either too many details relevant (displaying an inability to distinguish those which are significant) or conversely to suggest the attack was so extraordinary that none of the information would be of use in apprehending the offenders.
An endless pool of potential terrorists

Not only does the continuing presence of the perpetrator and claims of a “mastermind at large” perpetuate doubt as to the guilt of the remanded suspects in unclaimed narratives, this is further compounded by authorities’ inability to typify the actor responsible. The threat may stem from a single group, a state government, a combination of terrorist groups and governments (R165), or a collaborative effort between multiple terrorist organizations (WP95)—there is no shortage of possibilities. Heavy emphasis is placed on the magnitude of annual threats received by the attacked state (WP12, AP5); the United States alone has a list of more than 200,000 individuals and 3,000 groups who wish it harm (WP1). Under such circumstances, it is impossible to determine “who is fighting who or what they are fighting for” (NYT3). Conversely, within claimed attacks the pool of actors is limited to a division between the wider field of Islamic militancy and the particularity of the al Qaeda organization, dramatically narrowing the scope investigators are forced to cover.

Constituting the “extraordinary threat” via denial of the “normal” state-centered threat model

Within claimed attack narratives, the al Qaeda organization is first and foremost understood as a product of Osama bin Laden (AP399, R297). Though “worse” than other terrorist organizations in terms of cruelty and ruthlessness (G86, G93, DTT131), the group is a failing organism; with one-third of its command staff killed in combat (NYT122, G30, G31) and the majority of its attacks committed solely for propaganda value (AP137, CP15), al Qaeda is a spent force (NYT267, WP234, AP389, DTT21). The group remains of interest only insofar as it is a bombing suspect; even the infamous Osama bin Laden is practically nonexistent except in his capacity as founder (WP266, AP239, DTT141). As his influence in pivotal Muslim countries is
lost to younger and more technologically adept insurgents (AP246, AP247, AP285), *bin Laden* and his terror organization serve little function outside limiting the pool of possible antagonists.

Within unclaimed discourses the Saudi exile’s narrative value is most appreciable in the 1998 US Embassy bombings when the mass public was introduced to his radical agenda. Here *Osama bin Laden*’s presence overshadows mentions of his organization (which exists as a shadowy extension of the Saudi), in contrast to later cases where *bin Laden* is relevant only as *al Qaeda*’s founder and international delegate. *Bin Laden* evolves from a guerrilla leader with limited geographic and demographic reach to commander of a terrorist empire, a state unto himself. Though his role becomes increasingly marginal, *al Qaeda*—which continues as a direct product of *bin Laden*’s ingenuity and influence (NYT210, WP121, G64, DTT126, R97)—builds upon his statesmanlike reputation to assume the mantle of a normalized state power. *Al Qaeda* possesses a fully-developed network of alliances (though Iraq, Iran, and Sudan have garnered the group no favors with the international community) (NYT73, WP68, WP72, WP145, R112), led by its emir (NYT83, NYT90, WP57, WP73) and armed with a diplomatic ideologically-based agenda expressed through Islamist “ambassadors” (NYT73, WP71, AP171, AP279). This conferment of pseudo-statehood endows *al Qaeda* with privileges reserved for sovereign nations, such as the right to declare war (NYT176, AP222, G8) in pursuit of its policy agenda, which seeks to overthrow of nearly every Muslim government, curtail of Western influence, and suppress democratic values (NYT199, WP57, AP63, DTT70, R106). *Al Qaeda* attempts to achieve this goal with a combination of ruthlessness and sophistication that places it far ahead of other terrorist organizations such as ETA or IRA (WP176, G53, R244).
The power of *al Qaeda* and *Osama bin Laden* within unclaimed attack narratives stems from their presentation as a “normal” enemy in comparison to the atypical *general terrorism*, which is more terrifying, strange, and forbids the *attacked state* from using prior experience as an interpretive lens. It is significant to note that claimed cases display an almost total lack of rumination over the characteristics of *general terrorism*, excepting the occasional reference to irrational “fanatics” (NYT116, AP131, CP6). The tendency of unclaimed attacks to parallel the “normalized” *bin Laden* and *al Qaeda* threat with unspecified terrorism allows for a further estrangement of the universal danger that reemphasizes the helplessness of the *attacked state*, ensuring imminent harm while denying the existence of a means to handle the threat.

In contrast to *al Qaeda*, *general terrorism* is unlike any threat in existence (WP171, WP180, DTT89, DTT94); its agents will strike “whenever and however they can” (AP266), without warning (DTT62) and employing a shockingly intimate knowledge of Western intelligence services (NYT24, WP15). Given the “global terror inflation” that necessitates murder on a grander scale (G41, DTT38, R209), the average man has no defense against such violence: “there is no power on earth that can protect [him] from being bombed (…) the bomber will always get through” (AP2, DTT39, DTT40, R249). One cannot run from this ever-present threat (WP94, WP101), nor can it be mediated through law enforcement or military means (WP168, AP290). Its resources are infinite (NYT218, WP112, R164) and no concession will blunt its hatred (WP186, AP299). The *attacked state* and its population are thus at the mercy of a superior fighting force, whose proclivity to rage and violence will be satisfied with nothing less than the annihilation of both.

---

20 The 2005 London bombings again present an exception for reasons discussed previously.
**Homegrown bombers: the normal made strange**

Homegrown terrorist narratives exhibit a particular strategy of broadening the signals of impending aggression. The depiction of *suspects* as normal individuals “led astray,” particularly the possibility that they could be “any one of us,” denotes the idea of a “journey away from the ordinary” (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2009, p.88). Within this context a morally upright individual gradually acquires certain tendencies that force him or her from the “straight path.” This turn from normalcy is accompanied by the estrangement of common, everyday activities so as to retroactively impose “otherness” upon the bombers (claiming that one “missed the signs” is preferable than admitting there were none to miss). Meeting a group of friends for religious study or a sporting match becomes planning for the jihad; guiding children on a fieldtrip to London is scouting a potential attack location; declining to take part in social activities is antisocial radicalism (NYT151, WP58). Ordinary “business abroad” turns into cavorting with radical insurgents (DTT85)—even donning “blue jeans, T-shirts and running shoes [and] baseball caps” and looking for all the world like “backpackers heading off for a vacation” or a “hiking holiday” (WP251, G114, DTT151, DTT169) is taken as the uniform of a suicide bomber. In this sense, fear is not generated from a macro-level attack but from the ground-up, meaning that literally any action could be a “movement towards jihad” that has yet to be recognized as such.

**E. Possibility of Future Attack as Legitimizing State Action**

Within unclaimed discourses the continual possibility of a future attack legitimizes the present actions taken by the *attacked state*, situating the narrative consciousness in a very different temporal relationship compared to that of claimed attacks, which tend to focus on the connection
between similar past events and current circumstances. This trend is apparent not only in the proclivity of unclaimed discourses to employ premediation but also through a statistically significant disparity in the media’s choice of verbiage.

*Narrative instability due to the continued existence of the perpetrator*

The presence of the perpetrator figure throughout all four investigative phases despite the arrest of numerous suspects (exculpable though they may be) injects an element of narrative flux that maintains the possibility of a future attack, particularly given the aforementioned suspects’ seeming incapability of autonomously executing attacks. The perpetrator destabilizes what should have been an “open and shut” criminal case by suggesting the possibility of additional conspirators, replacing assurances of justice with paranoid conjectures: “where is the real mastermind?” (EM20). As claimed narratives depict a suspect detained, guilty, and proficient in the means of attack, further speculation over other imminent dangers is rare despite the survive of the larger al Qaeda network.

*Ultimate importance of the attack as herald of “new terrorism” rather than devastation wrought*

While it would be inaccurate to say that unclaimed attacks are not concerned with the damage caused by an act of violence, the true significance of the bombings is viewed in light of the “new era of terrorism,” of which the current attack is only the beginning. This is partly achieved through the use of premediation, which refers to the “manner in which media speculatively envision possible futures so that, should any disaster emerge, publics are not shocked and normal life disrupted” (Grusin 2004, cited in Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2009, p.83). The realization of this pattern within unclaimed cases is actualized in three ways: the perpetrators as significant based
upon their potential to cause harm, the means by which said perpetrators will accomplish their goals, and the attacked state as acting in the immediate present in response to a future attack that has yet to occur.

Those who conducted the terrorist attack are significant not only given the damage they wrought but also given the damage they could have rendered; the attack could have been “even more devastating” had minor deviations (such as accessing an underground parking garage as opposed to the adjacent lot) been achieved (NYT22, AP23). The new terrorism follows a “dirty-bomb of an ideology” (DTT64) and seeks to acquire biohazard materials that would produce an attack of untold devastation (R80). For example, the terrorists involved in a shoot-out during the 2004 Madrid bombing investigation posed a threat not due to their role in the rail bombings but given that they were plotting “more attacks which could have been catastrophic” (AP324, AP325, G78, DTT100).

Attacked states are very inventive in imagining the ways in which the terrorist actor will gain the upper hand, even if this may involve use of another nation’s resources. Morocco, for instance, is postulated as Europe’s “biggest terrorist threat (…) seething with as many as 1,000 adherents capable of suicide attacks and skilled at slipping through the continent’s southern gateway” (AP248). Alarm is sounded that an attack in another major European city is “only a matter of time” (NYT236) and that the region “might become the next front in the war against terror” (AP302). Hostile elements may use vulnerabilities such as the open rail networks of a region heavily dependent on rail transport (NYT189) or they may “turn democracy into a weapon” to undermine the Western political system (NYT203, DTT70) and thus introduce a “new quality of
threat” (NYT195, NYT196, WP171, WP180, WP183, DTT47). These scenarios even detail the collapse of the global superpower: America will “become increasingly vulnerable to hostile attack on our homeland and our military superiority will not entirely protect us,” meaning that “[we are] likely to die on American soil, possibly in large numbers” (R149).

In response to an attack that has yet to occur, the attacked state and its allies engage in immediate policy changes, evident in Germany’s panicked calls for an “immediate emergency gathering of officials” (NYT195, NYT196) or “huge anti-terror sweeps and arrests” in Britain, Belgium, France, Canada, and South Africa following the 2004 Madrid bombings (NYT218). Spain even withdrew its troops from Iraq on the principle that it “might get a kind of immunity from future terrorist attack by disengaging” (NYT199). In the aftermath of the 1998 Embassy bombings, the United States pursued an opposite tactic, ordering cruise missile strikes on targets in Afghanistan and Sudan to thwart “imminent plans for new attacks” (R78). The importance of these actions is that tactics of premediation narrate such catastrophes in a manner “almost indistinguishable from the way the future will be mediated when it happens” (Grusin, 2004, p.29). Consequently, premediation is “not about the future at all, but about enabling action in the present by visualizing and drawing on multiple imagined futures” (Amoore 2007, cited in de Goede, 2008, p.159).

**Nature of the past-present-future relationship**

The presence of an impending future atrocity does not imply, in any way, that unclaimed narratives do not recourse to past events in an attempt to contextualize or understand the damage wrought by the current attack. It is simply that unclaimed cases appear to find these events less
helpful in making sense of the present catastrophe, limiting the applicability of historical experience as one of the “tools” in the “toolbox” to fight terrorism. Two Chi-Square tests of statistical significance were performed in order to examine the nature of the relationship between past, present, and future attacks; the first test sought to determine the nature of past-future references within the discourse, while the following test examined the relationship of the past-present references.

In the construction of the first Chi-Square test, claimed/unclaimed references to future attacks were compared to allusions of past attacks (such as World War II, the Lockerbie bombing, etc.).\(^2\) As indicated by the data, references to previous atrocities do significantly factor into terrorist narratives; indeed, at first glance, they appear even more numerous than references to future attacks. However, it is not insensible that in the aftermath of any act of violence comparisons will be made to previous events—it is the nature of such comparisons that is particularly relevant, and will be explored in the subsequent test. It was mentioned previously that the 2005 London bombings, though a claimed attack, exhibit unclaimed narrative characteristics given the sizable lapse between execution and claim. When the data from the London bombings is factored into the claimed cases, no significant difference is found between the tendency for claimed and unclaimed attacks to reference future or past events in their attempts to understand the present. However: when the London data is removed and the subsequent totals for claimed attacks compared to their unclaimed counterparts, a strong disparity can be observed; here claimed attacks appear to reject the forecasting of future attacks,

\(^2\) See Appendix III.
while the tendency for unclaimed attacks to do so appears almost as strong as their attempts to reference previous events.

To understand the nature of this past-present relationship, a second Chi-Square test was conducted to determine in what way past events were related to the current attack. Historical comparisons may be divided into two categories: (1) *absolutes*, which make a break with and repudiate the usefulness of the past in understanding the current situation, and (2) *relatives*, which establish the current situation as comparable to a past event. In the case of the former, the comparison denotes the current attack as something entirely novel; the latter denotes the current tragedy as part of an existing pattern, implying that—just as its predecessor was overcome—the management of this latest catastrophe is within the realm of possibility for government, law enforcement, and security services. Even with the inclusion of the atypical London data, a statistically significant difference is observable in the two attack types’ inclination to use *absolute* references; unclaimed attacks characterize the present situation as something incomparable that exceeds current investigative and defense resources. Such assertions within claimed attacks are dominated by assurances of ordinary and familiar danger that allow for a more efficient response by the relevant authorities.

---

22 See Appendix IV.
CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS

The previous section examined points of distinction between unclaimed and claimed terrorist attacks. Yet how do we make sense of these patterns in a way that renders them applicable to the terrorist authors of the spectacle as well as the political decision-makers who are forced to respond? The distinctions between claimed and unclaimed attacks are relevant in that they affect the relationship between the terrorist, target population, and state through the framing process inherent to political problem solving. As will be discussed below, claimed terrorist attacks tend to be cast within a framework of uncertainty, whereas unclaimed terrorist attacks are cast within a framework of ambiguity. The two concepts have very real implications for the way in which the terrorist threat is understood and confronted.

A. Risk and the Notion of Risk Society

Risk can be understood as the “unambiguous assignment of definite probability to each and every event” (Dequech, 2000, p.5). It is measurable through the use of probabilistic calculations (Knight, 1946, p.233) and acts as the dominant form of calculative reasoning in modern society (Best, 2008, p.5). Consequently, the notion of risk functions around the idea that in a given situation, the individual decision maker is able to account for every possible outcome, assign a likelihood to each based upon the probability that it will occur, and the resulting data informs the decision that can thereafter be made.

A current strand of literature holds risk to be a foundational state for civil society (Pain & Smith 2008, p.1) and risk management as the primary mode of agreement between citizens and governments (Isin, 2004, p.219), redefining the nature of the social bond that relates a citizenry
and its government. Theorists have suggested that state societies, whose behavior was hitherto
driven by fear resulting from uncertainty of the capabilities and intentions of other states (Nelson 2010), have instead become risk societies as “subjects govern their conduct through risk and
governments primarily constitute themselves as safeguarding their subjects from [transnational] risks” (see Isin, 2004, p.318). In other words, “being at risk is the way of being and ruling in the
world of modernity; being at global risk is the human condition at the beginning of the twenty-

**B. Why Risk is Not an Appropriate Framework for the Terrorist Attack**

Though undoubtedly of use in explaining certain decision-making situations, the notion of risk is
less applicable as it pertains to the terrorist attack. First and foremost, risk assumes a continuum
on a scale of zero to one hundred, thus rendering possible a situation in which there is no risk.
Such a certainty does not exist in the world today, and the effort to strive for such in the face of
the impossible is one of the contingencies allowing for the birth of the neurotic citizen (see Isin
2004). Moreover, within the context of decision-making or problem solving, the distinction made
between the idea of risk and uncertainty is false. The principle of Knightian Uncertainty assumes
that the latter is “unable to be managed through probabilistic calculations because the situation
being dealt with is in a high degree unique” (Knight, 1946, p.233). However, the decision-maker
never knows with absolute certainty that an objective probability distribution exists, nor does
s/he understand the exact characteristics of this distribution. Consequently, in order to make a
decision at all, the decision-maker decides on what s/he considers a useful representation of
reality (Schrader et al., 1993, p.7) and attributes subjective probabilities to events (Dequech,
2000, p.4).
Beck (2006) also acknowledges that risk is largely the anticipation of catastrophe, and risks are “topical only to the extent that they are anticipated. Risks are not ‘real’, they are ‘becoming real’ (Joost van Loon). At the moment in which risks become real – for example, in the shape of a terrorist attack – they cease to be risks and become catastrophes” (p.332). If such is the case, than states are not guarding against real threats but rather possibilities; possibilities and their actualization bring the problem into the realm of the uncertain and ambiguous rather than the definitive and exact category of risk.

C. The Distinction between Uncertainty and Ambiguity

Uncertainty and ambiguity refer to two related but distinct concepts. Uncertainty stems from a lack of information and refers to a situation in which the problem solver considers the structure of a problem (including the relevant variables) as given but does not have the details necessary to determine the value of said variables (Martin & Meyerson, 1988, p.122, cited in Schrader et al., 1993, p.5). In other words, the framework of the problem is defined, the relevant variables within the problem identified, and the set of possible future outcomes understood; however, until the value of the variables and their associated probabilities are discovered, the likelihood of each outcome cannot be calculated. Uncertainty may thus be remedied by gathering more information about each variable. A mental model already demarcates the boundaries of the problem, determining what is relevant for understanding the phenomenon and identifying the specific tasks necessary with greater precision than occurs under ambiguity: a well-defined mental model “implicitly predetermines the relevant solution space for a problem” (Clement 1989, cited in

---

23 Though scholarship offers several interpretations, the distinction utilized here is primarily that as described by Schrader et al. (1993).
Schrader et al., 1993, p.4). Furthermore, framing a problem as one of *uncertainty* reduction implies that the resources necessary to solving the crisis are similar to the ones that have been used previously (Schrader et al., 1993, p.18) and thus already exist within the decision-maker’s “toolbox.” Given that tasks are already specified within the mental model they are also well-defined, meaning that is it possible to describe precisely the “content of specific roles that need to be fulfilled” in order to overcome the issue (Schrader et al., 1993, p.16).

In comparison, *ambiguity* can take one of two forms: (1) a situation in which the set of potentially relevant variables are identified but the relationships between variables and the problem structure are in need of determination, or (2) a situation in which the set of relevant variables themselves as well as their functional relationship and relationship to the problem structure are in need of further definition (Hubbard 2007; Martin & Meyerson, 1988, p.112, cited in Schrader et al., 1993, p.4; Schrader et al., 1993, p.5). Not only does ambiguity stem from a lack of information, it also stems from a lack of clarity. Ambiguity may be introduced into a situation in multiple ways, the most common of which is the existence of seemingly conflicting and irreconcilable information (Kosnik 1986; Meyerson & Martin 1987, cited in Schrader et al., 1993, p.12). Burns and Stalker (1966) provided evidence demonstrating how lateral (horizontal) communication networks (in comparison to vertical, top-down communication patterns) promote the communication of information outside the problem solver’s direct realm of expertise and tend to introduce greater amounts of such information (Schrader et al., 1993, p.12-3); modern media communication patterns strongly favor this trend. Furthermore, problem-solving behavior is strongly influenced by past experience; challenging a model used previously for solving what appears to be a similar problem implies that the decision-maker questions its existing
assumptions about *which* variables are important and their relationship to one another (Schrader et al., 1993, p.11). Finally, problem-solving under *ambiguity* requires not only gathering more information about the relevant variables, but first specifying the variables under consideration as well as their relationship to each other and the problem model. If the problem is framed so as to include an element of *ambiguity*, it is assumed that resources not been employed in the past may be required (Schrader et al., 1993, p.18) and moreover suggests that the tools currently available are not suitable for handling the issue. Problem-solving tasks within this environment can only be described in generalized terms, as it is still unclear what their content will be (Schrader et al., 1993, p.17).

**D. Claimed/Unclaimed Terrorist Attacks as Framed Under Uncertainty, Ambiguity**

Preventing or weathering an act of terrorism very much poses a problem solving dilemma for policymakers and publics alike in terms of formulating a response to the violence. This study suggests that claimed attacks tend to be framed as situations involving *uncertainty*, whereas unclaimed attacks are framed in terms of *ambiguity*.

**Claimed Attacks as Problems of Uncertainty**

Claimed terrorist attacks are discussed as situations of a familiar nature, with defined boundaries that demarcate the scope of the terrorist threat. The targets of violence are therefore able to understand the threat in its entirety, including the set of possible resolutions. There is no “surprise element” within a claimed attack; the *perpetrator*, able to upset the assured purveyance of justice within unclaimed narratives, ceases to exist in claimed narratives upon the arrest of *suspects*. No references are made to the possibility of an outside “coordinator” or “mastermind”
who continues to evade investigative efforts, eliminating the potential for an unknown outcome to upset the predetermined path of the state in rendering justice and restoring normalcy. The decisive lack of premeditation and speculation on future attacks further negates the possibility of an “infinite number” of possible conclusions to the terrorist act, allowing the current disaster to be understood in the singular; the attack is clearly temporally demarcated rather than compounded by the effects of a future attack realized in the present via state response.

With this definition comes an understanding of what variables are to be included or are relevant to the problem at hand. *Al Qaeda* and its founder are well-known criminal actors with whom law enforcement officials have an established history; yet even before *al Qaeda* claimed responsibility, claimed narratives narrow the pool of possible *perpetrators* to those practicing Islamist terrorism. More importantly, there are no ambiguous actors within such discourses; states and their allies are unquestionably endowed with ethical authority as just protectors and guardians of Western values in the face of danger; they act as a bulwark against the forces of terrorist barbarism to defend “civilized” society. Detainees are, in contrast to unclaimed narratives, mature criminal actors capable of autonomously plotting and executing skilled operations and having proven their depravity through participation in previous terrorist activities; their culpability is unquestionable and thus the moral legitimacy of the state confirmed. Even prior to the arrest of *suspects*, postulations of the *perpetrators* as superhuman are immediately dispelled by rational explanation, rendering the detainees ordinary (albeit proficient) actors able to be addressed through normal law enforcement measures.
The implementation of a tried-and-true model of police vs. criminal implies that existing resources may be utilized in the apprehension of those responsible, which lends itself to the scripting of particular problem-solving tasks and thus investigative progress. Boasts of state power, technological superiority, and experience in the handling of insurgencies are thus applicable to the present situation, increasing public confidence in authorities’ ability to fulfill their security contract. The nature of past-present comparisons in framing the current attack as the newest incarnation of an old threat implies it will be handled successfully in the manner of its predecessor.

Unclaimed Attacks as Problems of Ambiguity

Unclaimed attacks are comparatively modeled as problems of ambiguity, which is introduced both through conflicting actor identities as well as through challenging the existing model of placating the terrorist threat. First and foremost, unclaimed attacks exhibit a lack of clarity with regard to the primary actors and their associations. As Dingley (2005) notes, “if an agreement is ambiguous, it is not an agreement” (p.176); consequently, if there is not clear agreement on who is or is not a source of threat, either everyone or no one is a danger. Given that an attack has already occurred—along with the ongoing possibility of a repeat performance—everyone becomes a prospective terrorist. Actor ambiguity proceeds among several veins: confusion between “victims” and “attackers” (via the exoneration of suspects and the attacked state-as-attacker through the detaining of innocents and production of terrorists), and a blurring of the “civilized” and “barbaric.” This latter theme is explored through the characterization of perpetrators as masters of “civilized man” and embodying to a greater extent the principles of “civilized” behavior, as well as the moral degradation of Western society and its abandonment of
rational principles. Attacked nations become models of “uncivilized” behavior: untrustworthy, deceitful and foolish, their use of gratuitous violence, support for torture, and unjust imprisonment undermines their identity as part of the Free World.

With the invalidation of the old framework a new model is required, yet it is impossible to demarcate the boundary of the new threat. The current security insurance paradigm in Western society is based upon “scientific calculus and group profiling” (Aradau & Van Munster, 2007, p.103); this is impossible in an environment where estrangement of the normal provides for anything and everything as suspicious. Unclaimed attack discourses offer an endless pool of possible perpetrators whose continual presence wreaks instability despite suspects’ arrest. Note that the superhuman abilities of the perpetrator and his desire to do harm are consistent and unchallenged throughout the discourse, rendering the identity—according to Hopf (2009)—among the strongest and most salient. Furthermore, the labels used to describe said suspects are indeterminate from the ones employed by the targeted population—family men, brothers, Westerners, sports lovers, charmers—implying that we are a source of threat as well as its victims. Continued references to a “mastermind” at large contribute to the inability to define the problem scope, with the statesmanlike Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda posed in stark contrast to the uncontained and virulent nature of general terrorism. Finally, the use of premediation resists any and all attempts to describe even the temporal boundaries of the danger; the importance of the terrorist act rests in its potential, with ambiguity introduced via the imagination of infinite futures (as imagination is inherently interpretive and thus always open to ambiguity) (de Goede, 2008, p.156,159; Salter, 2008, p.248, cited in Best, 2008, p.7). In turn, states are forced to react to a possible future attack, something that has not, and may not, ever occur; as such, the effects
of a future attack in terms of policy response and popular fear have already been realized, a terrorist attack that requires absolutely nothing on the part of the terrorist. In such a way, premediation becomes the catastrophe (Countin 2008, cited in de Goede, 2009, p.171) as it mediates multiple futures in a manner indistinguishable from the way the future will be mediated when it is realized (Grusin, 2004, p.29).

This new model, indefinite as it is, requires resources outside of the state’s possession. The threat is new, unique, and wrought by all-powerful, divinely favored perpetrators; boasts of military prestige and previous anti-terrorist accomplishments are irrelevant. Narrative focus is on a present that cannot be linked in any meaningful sense with previous experience, except to distinguish it as distinct from such; as Cooper (2006) notes, “if the catastrophe befalls us, it is from a future without chronological continuity with the past…no mass of information will help us pin-point the precise when, where and how of the coming havoc. We can only speculate” (p.119). What is more, problem-solving tasks towards the resolution of the threat can only be issued in general terms; consequently, states and their allies never appear to make real progress in the investigation as the true attacker, the perpetrator, is untouchable given that s/he is a figment of our own creation. Descriptions of the attack as “extraordinary” and “unthinkable” further depoliticizes the event, as “unthinkable becomes unspeakable, and so we are excused from further enquiry” (Edkins, 2003, p.176, cited in de Goede, 2009, p.167). Consequently, there is no one to be held accountable for the security threat posed not only by the terrorists, but by the state and society itself.
E. Ambiguity as Applied to Claim Scholarship

Given the tendency of the unclaimed attack to employ an element of ambiguity, it is beneficial to review scholarly explanations surrounding claims of responsibility so as to determine those that appear applicable in rendering a terrorist advantage.

The New Religious Character of Terrorism

Al Qaeda, through generally propagated as an exemplar of the “new religious terrorism,” is presented within the case studies as a primarily political actor in that its ultimate goal is realizing the downfall of Western governments and pro-Western regimes in the Middle East. Moreover, a vast proportion of the accompanying commentary issued by al Qaeda (or its leader) exhorts young men to commit acts of terrorism on its behalf. Consequently it would be hasty to assume that terrorist groups utilizing religious verbiage to accomplish political outcomes are not targeting an earthly population; the fact that al Qaeda has conducted both claimed and unclaimed attacks indicates that there is utility to be found in both strategies.

Media Coverage and the Establishment of Legitimacy

Both claimed and unclaimed attacks without question cast the act of terrorist violence as illegitimate and without possible rational justification. However, whereas the terrorist actor is also criminalized in the case of claimed attacks, unclaimed attacks construct a duality between guilty perpetrator/innocent suspect that exonerates the arrested individuals of responsibility. In addition, though culpable, perpetrators are ultimately viewed as a “superior other” who ironically embodies to a greater extent the values of “civilized” society, particularly given the state’s demotion from protector of freedoms to illegitimate actor and source of threat. Thus,
while the terrorist act itself may never be justified, the insurgent organization is able to make use of a lawful, superior “other” while simultaneously bringing into question the moral authority of state in determining the bounds of legitimacy.

*Interpretive Power of Audience*

Given the misattribution of responsibility for the terrorist act in the case of the 2004 Madrid bombings, the inability to determine either actor or motivation in the 1998 US Embassy bombings, and the reality that in both cases determination of the culpable group was made only by luck or chance, it is unlikely that in the current globalized environment where a terrorist attack could originate from any number of transnational actors, a group would fail to claim an act of violence based solely on the assumption that the audience will understand the desired message.

*Embarrassment of Failure*

Considering that the 2005 Aqaba attacks were claimed despite the terrorists’ failure to hit US Navy targets and in light of the fact that the failed July 21 London bombings served to heighten public anxiety and reinforce a psychology of vulnerability, failed attacks appear to serve a purpose in the terrorist arsenal. Failure to claim credit simply based upon success of outcome thus does not appear to be a significant consideration of terrorist organizations.

*Fear of Retaliation by Authorities*

It is important to note that *al Qaeda* was the subject of counter-terrorism measures regardless of claim status; for instance, America launched retaliatory rocket attacks following the 1998 US
Embassy bombing despite *Osama bin Laden*’s denial of authorship. Certainly, a delay in credit claiming to allow one’s compatriots to escape from harm’s reach (as occurred in the 2005 Aqaba rocket attacks) is strategically understandable; ultimately, however, an attempt to claim credit was made by the perpetrating organization. The plentiful pool of false claims made for each attack furthermore assumes a certain utility of having one’s name attacked to an attack regardless of the possibility of state recrimination.

*Public Relations Maintenance*

As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the plethora of false claims attached to each case study assumes the existence of a certain advantage in associating one’s name with an attack. The fact that *al Qaeda* claimed the 2005 London bombings, the most atrocious of all cases in terms of death toll as well as shock value, perhaps also indicates a lack of concern for an “overly bloody” reputation.

*Greater Fear-Inciting Potential*

Of the possible explanations offered by current literature (with the exception of establishing actor legitimacy), the disparity noted between unclaimed/claimed attacks appears to support the fear hypothesis. Schmid and Jongman (1988) concede that terrorist groups are rarely capable of keeping a whole population in a permanent state of fear (Rapin, 2009, p.167); Horgan (2005) notes that terror will not be achieved unless we, personally, are the subjects of an attack (p.14), and even then that the duration of this fear is limited (Rapin 2009). This lends itself to the conundrum that terrorists desire to propagate fear amongst the target population, but: (1) it is
limited to the subjects of attack (2) it fades rapidly after an attack (3) continual attacks result in mass desensitization and adaptation to violence.

As Norman Cousins points out in his *Modern Man Is Obsolete*, “where man can find no answer, he will find fear”; likewise, “where man has already found fear, he will find answers” (Overstreet, 1951, p.105). The unclaimed attack offers a solution in that it opens new narrative space in which the terrorist actor can perpetuate the reach and lasting effects of his attack; response by the government to a future attack affects the entirety of the population, and given that the location of a future attack remains unspecified, everyone is a potential victim. By destabilizing mutually-exclusive categories of “attacker” and “victim,” the terrorist creates new sources of fear (e.g. the government, neighbors, family), violating the most intimate levels of trust while reinforcing the surety of the coming attack. Consequently, society suffers from an inability to identify the attacker while at the same time convinced of its impending annihilation at the hands of said attacker. The type of fear perpetuated by the unclaimed attack also differs from its claimed counterpart; rather than a “hierarchical fear” built by a national-level event and subject to top-down distribution (most intense at the site of the attack with a “trickle-down” effect as it radiates out) (Pain & Smith, 2008, p.8), unclaimed attacks create a web of “grass-roots fear” built from the ground up in which fear is perpetuated among all members of the population and found in the conduct of everyday life; new sources of fear are identified and reinforced daily, compounding and broadening the impact of the original attack.
Impact of Environmental Characteristics

Despite a wide variety of geographic locations for the attacks, the cultural heritage of the targeted audiences (the United States, Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom) is not radically diverse. Consequently, the impact of the target nation’s socio-demographic characteristics on claim utility cannot be evaluated. However, the setting in which the attack is conducted does not appear to exercise a significant influence over the claiming of responsibility, as both claimed and unclaimed attacks occurred in Europe, the Middle East, and post-colonial societies alike.
CHAPTER 8: IMPORTANCE OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The framing of terrorist attacks is of note primarily because, given that the nature of the problem and the identities of the actors are constructed, defined, and understood through the narrative selections identified by the decision maker, it stands to reason that politicians and their media counterparts can recast the unclaimed attack narrative in order to minimize the fear-provoking and legitimizing effects offered the terrorist by the discourse’s destabilization of mutually exclusive categories and prompting of grassroots fear mechanisms.

Future research might expand the number of terrorist groups included in the study to determine if the patterns identified here hold true for a variety of religiously motivated insurgent groups; one might also broaden the range of targeted nations to include those not considered part of Western society and not beholden to the strict human rights norms that bind such countries. Given the shift of claiming patterns over the past half-century, later studies might benefit from examining if such narrative discrepancies existed during the height of terrorist claiming in the 1970s, or if the disparity is a product of changing media tactics and the evolving media-public relationship. The application of positivist methodologies such as process-tracing may also be useful in determining if the selection of problem framing consistently manifests itself in the choice of particular political measures that would strengthen the terrorist cause. Most importantly, this study suggests that the length of time between execution of a terrorist act and the claim of responsibility be treated as a variable of interest, given its perceived influence on frame choice.
References


Post, J. M. (2007). *The mind of the terrorist: The psychology of terrorism from the IRA to al-


Rapoport, D. C. (1997). To claim or not to claim; that is the question—always! *Terrorism and Political Violence, 9*(1), 11-17.


News Reference Key


24 Note that any gap in numbering is intention and a product of the elimination of sources based upon the stated methodology following the collection and evaluation of the media articles.


WP124  Loeb, V. (2000, October 29). Warnings of terror attack were broad, vague; No specific threat of imminent strike preceded USS Cole blast in Yemeni port. The Washington Post, p. A34.


Richburg, K.B. (2004, October 17). Madrid attacks may have targeted election; Wiretaps bolster theory that blasts were timed to hurt chances of leader who backed Iraq war. The Washington Post, p. A16.


WP250 Shadid, A. (200, July 16). Egyptian linked to attackers held for questioning in Cairo; Biochemist thought to have helped rent Leeds townhouse. The Washington Post, p. A14.


Hughes, C. (1998, August 13). Detentions announced in embassy bombings; FBI may have found parts of bomb vehicle. The Associated Press.


Mbitiru, C. (1998, August 18). FBI raids hotel in Nairobi where bomb believed to have been made. The Associated Press.


AP177  Burns, R. (2000, October 18). If the perpetrator can be fingered, will Clinton order military retaliation? *The Associated Press.*


Woolls, D. (2004, April 2). Bomb found under tracks of high-speed rail line in Spain; May be same explosive used in Madrid attacks. The Associated Press.


Quinn, J. (2006, July 6). London bomber says in video that attacks were “only the beginning.” *The Associated Press*.


Norton-Taylor, R., Campbell, D., Dodd, V. (2005, July 8). Intelligence officials were braced for an offensive – but lowered threat levels. The Guardian, p. 10.


Elliott, L. (2005, July 8). High street was already struggling and now shoppers will think twice. The Guardian, p.


Lawson, M. (2005, July 23). On the tube the dread felt deeper…there was the grim feeling of a pattern taking shape. The Guardian, p. 5.


Laville, S. (2005, September 3). Friends claim Khan’s statement was faked; Old and young refuse to accept youth worker’s role in attack. *The Guardian*, p. 10.


DTT64 McCartney, J. (2004, March 14). Even if it was ETA, this was an al-Qaeda victory: Global terror spells doom for nationalist groups. *The Daily Telegraph*, p. 24.


DTT89  LaGuardia, A., Helm, T. (2004, March 20). “We should have hit al-Qa’eda sooner”: Jack Straw believes it was a mistake to let bin Laden wage his campaign of terror unchecked for so long. *The Daily Telegraph*, p. 11.


DTT101  Wilkinson, I., La Guardia, A. (2004, April 5). Allah is great and we are doing to die killing, shouted one of the terrorists. *The Daily Telegraph*, p. 04.


Utley, T. (2005, July 8). We must accept that the terrorist threat is here to stay. *The Daily Telegraph*, p. 22.


DTT133 (2005, July 9). I’m proud of Londoners who came through this nightmare. No one can break the will of this city. *The Times*, p. 20.


CP2  (2008, June 2). Fatalities have been reported after a bomb explodes. *Copenhagen Post*. Retrieved from http://www.cphpost.dk/


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


**Appendix I**

**CLAIMS ISSUED FOR ATTACKS**

*UNCLM: Unclaimed Attack*  
*CLM: Claimed Attack*

**1998 US Embassy Bombings, Kenya/Tanzania (UNCLM)**  
*August 7, 1998*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Claim Issued</th>
<th>Claimant</th>
<th>Credible (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 8, 1998</td>
<td>Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 8, 1998</td>
<td>Army for the Liberation of Holy Shrines</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 19, 1998</td>
<td>Platoon of Martyr Khaled al-Said</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 25, 1998</td>
<td>Osama Bin Laden</td>
<td>Denial of Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 20, 2007</td>
<td>Walid Muhammad [Tawfiq] bin Attash, al Qaeda operative, confesses under interrogation at Guantanamo Bay that he organized the 1998 Embassy bombings and the 2000 USS Cole bombing</td>
<td>Confession (not considered claim)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2008 Danish Embassy Bombing, Islamabad (CLM)**  
*June 2, 2008*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Claim Issued</th>
<th>Claimant</th>
<th>Credible (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 5, 2008</td>
<td>Yazid, commander of al Qaeda in Afghanistan, claims credit via website</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 22, 2008</td>
<td>Yazid claims credit in an interview with Pakistan’s Geo TV program</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2000 USS Cole Bombing, Yemen (UNCLM)**  
*October 12, 2000*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Claim Issued</th>
<th>Claimant</th>
<th>Credible (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 13, 2000</td>
<td>Islamic Army of Aden-Abyan</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 13, 2000</td>
<td>Mohammed’s Army</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 13, 2000</td>
<td>Islamic Deterrence Force</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 13, 2000</td>
<td>Osama bin Laden</td>
<td>Denial of Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 20, 2007</td>
<td>Walid Muhammad [Tawfiq] bin Attash, al Qaeda operative, confesses under interrogation at Guantanamo Bay that he organized the 1998 Embassy bombings and the 2000 USS Cole bombing</td>
<td>Confession (not considered claim)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2005 Aqaba Rocket Bombings, Aqaba, Jordan (CLM)
**August 19, 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Claim Issued</th>
<th>Claimant</th>
<th>Credible (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 19, 2005</td>
<td>Abdullah al-Azzam Brigades of the al-Qaeda Organization in the Levant and Egypt</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 23, 2005</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in Iraq (led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2004 Madrid Rail Bombings, Madrid, Spain (UNCLM)
**March 11, 2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Claim Issued</th>
<th>Claimant</th>
<th>Credible (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 11, 2004</td>
<td>Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 12, 2004</td>
<td>Abu Dujan al-Afghani, al-Qaeda’s “spokesman in Europe”</td>
<td>N (actor not on record)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Appears that there is no evidence that al Qaeda Central helped plan, finance or carry out the bombings, or even knew about them in advance</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Cell may have been trained by Mustafa Setmarian Nasar, who was once affiliated with al Qaeda Central but now functions independently</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2005 London Subway Bombings, London, United Kingdom (CLM)
**July 7, 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Claim Issued</th>
<th>Claimant</th>
<th>Credible (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 7, 2005</td>
<td>Secret Organization Group of al Qaeda of Jihad Organization in Europe</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 9, 2005</td>
<td>Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 13, 2005</td>
<td><em>The Independent</em> reports initial findings of investigation that bombers acted independently</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1, 2005</td>
<td>Ayman al-Zawahiri claimed 7/7 attacks via video recording (believed to be al Qaeda’s video, but the organization’s role as either active sponsor or source of inspiration is not yet clarified; video thought to be edited after attacks)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II

BREAKDOWN OF ARTICLES BY NEWSPAPER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>1-83</td>
<td>84-87</td>
<td>88-153</td>
<td>154-160</td>
<td>161-213</td>
<td>214-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>1-23</td>
<td>24-33</td>
<td>34-36</td>
<td>37-40</td>
<td>41-85</td>
<td>86-238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reuters</td>
<td>1-127</td>
<td>128-134</td>
<td>135-188</td>
<td>189-205</td>
<td>206-280</td>
<td>281-378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicken, Copenhagen Post</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1-15</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ra’y</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jordan Times</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1-13</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Mundo</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1-30</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Pais</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1-28</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix III

CHI-SQUARE TEST OF STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE, PAST-FUTURE ATTACKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unclaimed Attacks</th>
<th>Claimed Attacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Attacks</td>
<td>17$^1$</td>
<td>23$^2$, 0$^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Attacks</td>
<td>24$^3$</td>
<td>39$^4$, 25$^{***}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square value (including London): 0.198
Chi-Square value $^{**}$, $^{***}$ (excluding London): 13.962$^{+}$
Critical value at $p = 0.05$: 3.84

1 NYT71, NYT199, NYT215, NYT236, WP51, WP78, WP79, WP75, AP325, G47, G61, DTT40, DTT41, R36, R37, R249, R280

2 NYT253, NYT339, NYT322, WP221, WP223, WP236, AP402, AP451, AP453, AP497, G107, G109, G148, G170, G196, G227, G236, DTT147, DTT198, DTT240, DTT241, R335, R377

3 NYT24, NYT39, NYT123, NYT127, NYT131, NYT133, NYT185, NYT195, NYT235, NYT243, WP170, WP213, AP2, AP6, AP147, AP148, G85, DTT24, DTT60, DTT62, DTT93, DTT103, DTT109, R172


** Without 2005 London bombing articles


$^{+}$ Statistically significant
Appendix IV

PAST-PRESENT ATTACKS: BREAKDOWN OF ABSOLUTES VS. RELATIVES

**Absolutes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unclaimed Attacks</th>
<th>Claimed Attacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadliest Ever</td>
<td>16$^1$</td>
<td>2$^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Ever</td>
<td>6$^3$</td>
<td>21$^4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprecedented</td>
<td>12$^5$</td>
<td>2$^6$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worst Ever</td>
<td>43$^7$</td>
<td>14$^8$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 NYT220, WP25, WP31, WP196, AP25, AP29, AP36, AP47, AP331, AP351, AP359, AP371, DTT42, DTT61, R275, EM25
2 R295, R297
3 NYT125, WP191, AP12, AP281, G52, DTT70
4 NYT282, NYT284, NYT320, NYT332, WP238, WP243, WP245, WP252, WP332, AP417, AP419, AP422, AP492, G115, G237, R300, R304, R305, R364, R373, R377**
5 NYT18, NYT184, NYT200, WP166, AP4, AP276, G2, G4, G53, G76, DTT37, DTT38
6 G119, DTT198
8 NYT277, NYT300, NYT364, WP240, WP242, WP246, WP250, WP300, AP501, G86, DTT120, DTT125, DTT143, DTT228

**Note that all data for “First Ever” in this section was drawn from references to “first ever suicide attack” in the 2005 London bombings**
**READ ANONYMITY**

**Relatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unclaimed Attacks</th>
<th>Claimed Attacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadliest Since</td>
<td>17(^1)</td>
<td>5(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Since</td>
<td>11(^3)</td>
<td>6(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Serious Since</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10(^5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next in Series</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22(^6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worst Since</td>
<td>39(^7)</td>
<td>23(^8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 NYT185, NYT195, NYT209, NYT235, NYT243, AP194, AP196, AP197, AP277, AP302, DTT62, DTT93, DTT103, R233, R238, R243, R248
2 AP125, AP127, AP133, AP134, NYT304
3 AP2, AP11, AP139, AP142, AP152, DTT74, R235, R236, R254, R256, R263
4 NYT178, WP154, AP237, G38, G39, G228
5 AP238, AP239, AP240, AP244, AP247, G40, R201, R202, R203, R205
6 NYT116, WP84, WP215, WP221, AP125, AP126, AP379, G25, G26, G29, DTT20, DTT21, DTT121, DTT122, R128, R129, R132, R281, R285, R286, R295, R357
7 NYT123, NYT127, NYT131, NYT133, WP96, WP164, AP142, AP147, AP148, AP154, AP158, AP159, AP162, AP163, AP165, AP166, AP167, AP168, AP169, AP171, AP172, AP173, AP174, AP176, AP177, AP179, AP254, AP256, AP257, AP308, DTT24, DTT34, R206, R211, R213, R218, R221, R224, R231
8 NYT247, NYT255, NYT269, NYT273, NYT276, NYT281, NYT288, WP225, WP226, WP229, WP289, AP379, AP381, AP384, AP387, AP391, AP392, AP393, AP394, AP406, AP444, AP466, DTT117

**CHI-SQUARE TEST OF STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE, PAST-PRESENT ATTACKS**

(ABSOLUTES VS. RELATIVES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unclaimed Attacks</th>
<th>Claimed Attacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Absolutes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Relatives</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square value: 6.510\(^+\)
Critical value at \(p = 0.05\): 3.84

\(^+\) Statistically significant