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Jeffrey Kaplan & Christopher P. Costa

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## On Tribalism: Auxiliaries, Affiliates, and Lone Wolf Political Violence

JEFFREY KAPLAN

Department of Religious Studies and Anthropology; and Institute for the Study of Religion, Violence, and Memory, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, USA

CHRISTOPHER P. COSTA

Department of the Navy (DoN), Hampton Roads, Virginia, USA

*In this article, we endeavor to shed new light on the consequences of tribalism in the present day, one of the most important of which is the threat posed by lone wolf actors and the emergence of autonomous cells that operate with no central direction. To better acquaint the reader with the theoretical models used in this article—in particular the Trinitarian model of Carl von Clausewitz—we begin with historic models dating back to Alexander the Great. The central focus of our article posits a reconceptualization of tribalism as a driving force behind the global jihadist phenomenon. We will go into the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan in some depth, believing that it is necessary to provide a close examination of these case studies to better understand the emergence of jihadist lone wolves who operate both in the ungoverned spaces of the Middle East and South Asia and in their Western homelands. We conclude with an examination of cases of jihadist lone wolf terrorism involving recent converts to radical Islam in the U.S. Finally, our article focuses on the emerging security threats posed by lone wolves, autonomous cells, and the challenges ahead for the military, security, and intelligence services.*

**Keywords** Abu Musab al-Suri, Anwar al-Awlaki, Azzam al-Amriki, Bryant Neal Vinas, Dr. Nidal Malik Hasan, Salafiyya, T. E. Lawrence, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, Carl von Clausewitz, Wilhelm Wasmuss

Jeffrey Kaplan is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Institute for the Study of Religion, Violence, and Memory at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. Colonel Christopher P. Costa, USA, (Ret), is a senior Department of the Navy (DoN) civilian, Hampton Roads, VA. In a 25-year U.S. Army career he served the majority of his service with Special Operations Forces (SOF). He has communicated his research results through conferences in the United States and abroad.

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the United States government.

Address correspondence to Jeffrey Kaplan, Department of Religious Studies and Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, 800 Algoma Boulevard, Oshkosh, WI 54901-8637, USA. E-mail: kaplan@uwosh.edu

## Introduction

Few illustrations better typify the overused clichés of Alexander the Great's military adventurism in Afghanistan than his tribal alliances and clashes. One particular historical strand reveals that Alexander the Great and the Macedonian army—at the outset of his Indian Campaign in 327 B.C.—strategically sought ways to build necessary alliances with tribes for geopolitical and tactical reasons. In return, these tribal auxiliaries launched an expedition—with a divided army in what is modern-day Jalalabad—toward the Indus River valley.<sup>1</sup> The Macedonian armies marched with their tribal auxiliaries, and were beset throughout their march by untold tribal intrigues—even from pre-Islamic Buddhist “holy-men—corresponding to the modern mullahs.”<sup>2</sup> And so, that period of Alexander the Great's Afghan-Indian campaign was marked by a paradoxical combination of cooperation, resistance, and tribal betrayals.

The tradition of fighting with tribal auxiliaries or, better, by using tribal surrogates, took deep root in the Middle East. The Umayyad (661–750 A.D.) and the Abassid (750–1258) empires of classical Islam rose, held power, and fell according to their abilities to create and maintain strong alliances with local tribes. Both empires succeeded for a time in playing one tribal group against another. Both survived by maintaining fluid alliances, which could keep any single tribal group from amassing enough local power to challenge the empire's primacy. The Umayyads fell when the aspirations of recent converts to the faith were not met with the full acceptance and brotherhood envisioned by Mohammad. The fate of the Abbasids, who unseated the Umayyad caliphate by harnessing the resentments of the new Muslims, was in the end not greatly different.<sup>3</sup>

In the 19th century, Western imperial powers adopted the fluid alliance pattern to maintain their control of the region. American policy in Iraq inexplicably failed to recognize the tribal nature of Iraqi society until it was too late.<sup>4</sup> As one senior academic advisor responsible to the U.S. command lamented, “It took two years to convince senior commanders that there was such a thing as a tribe.”<sup>5</sup> The United States eventually adopted the tribal alliance pattern to create the so-called “Sunni Awakening” that for a time allowed them to consolidate the power of the central government. Unlike their imperial predecessors, however, the U.S. could not adapt their traditions of maintaining lasting alliances to the Middle Eastern tradition that saw alliances as momentary and to be maintained only as long as the tribe could reasonably profit. In Afghanistan, the U.S. failed to adapt to the “great game” of tribal politics necessary to salvage U.S. objectives in the midst of the endless warfare that has engulfed the country since the Soviet invasion in 1979.

Today, jihadist fighters dream of reconstituting the classical empires, which is seen as Islam's “Golden Age.”<sup>6</sup> In this vision, the global Islamic *Umma* (community) is seen as one vast united and cohesive tribe. This idealization of the tribal model is not restricted to the Islamic world. Rather, the deep roots of tribalism are a global phenomenon. Africa, the historical epicenter of the tribe as the sole focus of group allegiance, is emerging as the focus of a great power struggle for the continent's resources. The primary antagonists in this competition, China and the United States, are both currently being challenged by tribal actors. The U.S. challenge is taking place in the Middle East and South Asia. The primary threat to Chinese interests is separation movements in heavily tribal areas that are together somewhat misleadingly designated as *autonomous regions* (although there is not a great deal of

autonomy to be had in any of them). Lone wolf and autonomous cell-based terrorism is already a major concern to U.S. policy makers and, given the heavy-handed tactics employed by the Chinese in the autonomous areas, is presumably a possibility that must concern Chinese policymakers.

Clearly, the resurgence of tribalism is a global rather than a regional phenomenon. During the long-running battle against apartheid in South Africa, for example, opponents of the African National Congress often referred to their battle for the survival of the “white tribe.” Mercenaries from around the world flocked to both South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) to fight for this racial/tribal flag rather than for any particular local party.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the Euro-American radical right sees the white race in distinctly tribal terms, as do various emergent nationalisms, e.g., the Basques and the welter of Slavic “small nationalisms” that have turned to violence at various points in the 20th century.<sup>8</sup>

Radical racial and ethnic nationalisms are simultaneously ascriptive and aspirational. They are first ascriptive in that being born into the race or ethnicity is the price of admission. They become aspirational when a subset of the racial or ethnic group seeks to “reconstitute,” “purify,” or to bring to life a Golden Age based on the dream of a mythical past in which the race or ethnicity were believed to have had primacy over all others and had thus lived as the forbearers had originally intended. These Golden Age dreams are invariably expressed in tribal terms. Tropes of a “theft of culture,” or a diving punishment administered when their forbearers had left the path on which they had been meant to be, are ubiquitous in these discourses. Such dreams are invariably cherished by a minority who, unable to convince the majority to see the world as they do, come to perceive themselves as members of an elite—a righteous remnant in biblical terms—for whom the only hope to assure the survival of the idealized tribe or ethnicity is to embark on a campaign of purification and thus move from ascriptive to aspirational tribalism. Most of these aspirational tribes are benign. In the 19th century, movements like Pan-Slavism and Zionism appealed to secular intellectuals while British-Israelism appealed to a small number of eccentric British Bible believers who saw the Anglo-Saxon race rather than the Jews as the true heirs to the Covenant of Abraham.<sup>9</sup> Not all of these newly minted aspirational tribes are benign however. The history of the 20th and the 21st centuries are strewn with the corpses of those who were not included in the Golden Age dream. The killing fields of Cambodia, the Balkan wars in former Yugoslavia, and the destruction of the Acholi tribe in Uganda at the hands of the Lord’s Resistance Army—a classic example of malign aspirational tribalism which arose from the heart of the ascriptive Acholi tribe—are just a few examples of this dynamic.<sup>10</sup>

This article argues that there are two forms of modern tribalism that impact the U.S. security environment. The first, *ascriptive tribalism*, refers to tribes, as we currently understand them: forms of organization based on kinship, blood, and quite often territory. The second, *aspirational tribalism*, is less understood, but there is an underside to this form of tribalism that constitutes an increasing menace to U.S. security interests. This form of tribalism occurs when those born outside of the tribal system desire to be accepted by tribal actors, actual or virtual. The tribes to which one might aspire may be ascriptive tribes, but more often they are aspirational tribes whose messages, no longer mediated by governments or corporate media, reach a global audience via social media. At the apex of aspirational tribes that constitute a security threat to the U.S. is al-Qaeda, but the Taliban in Afghanistan or Pakistan would be included in this definition. Not all aspirational

tribes constitute a threat however. Benign aspirational groups, for example, would include the global Muslim community (*Umma*), which believes that every convert to Islam is accepted as a member as a result of the conversion process. Similarly included are the rare cases in which an outsider is accepted as a member of an ascriptive tribe. *Malign aspirational tribalism* (MAT) is normative, however, and from their number emerge lone wolf actors and the establishment of autonomous cells within the aspirants country of origin.<sup>11</sup> Explicit in our argument is the intricate and nuanced historical phenomenon of the interplay between warriors and tribes.

Just as it is necessary to look at ancient models of tribes in the context of warfare, it is equally as crucial to examine MAT today. This need is best illustrated by the patterns of jihadist movements, which share many core goals such as globalized Islamic unity and the rejection of Western values. To the extent that we recognize that tribes and tribalism are differentially rooted in societal patterns—including political violence and expedient tribal alliances—this new line of inquiry leads us to another theme that emerges in this article. It is in the context of warfare and a relentless Western counterterrorism strategy, then, that we may examine aspirational tribalism or, perhaps better labeled, *malign aspirational tribalism*—an extra-tribalism dynamic, which will threateningly give rise to the creation of autonomous jihadist cells or lone wolf forms of political violence.

### **The “New Tribalism”**

This article takes as its theme the two forms of tribalism, though in either case, both patterns pose irregular challenges to those actors who focus on militarized coercion or political violence.<sup>12</sup> Even so, a common characteristic of tribes is the relative impermeability of the tribal structure, due to the fact that classic tribal patterns often are distinguished by land and blood, or with a more abstract pattern—inspirational tribalism—which retains its dominant ideology and passion, or some combination, while lacking direct blood ties.

An implicit assumption of this article, which underscores the need for the term “new tribalism,” is that tribal patterns are not static, but are permeable to developments in the outside world. Within tribal societies, there are invariably strands of belief that may be thought of as modernizers, those who seek to adapt tribal patterns to the exigencies of national and global culture, and traditionalists who seek, to as great a degree as possible, to preserve the structures and patterns of the past. Within this struggle are constellations of clans and families that comprise the support for competitive leaderships representing their respective camps. However, in a globalized world that is the arena for the interaction of nation states, corporations, and NGOs, the dream of maintaining the continuity of tribal traditions is just that—a dream. Traditional patterns have long since adapted to the exigencies of the modern world, as this has been the price of survival in the modern world. The “new tribalism” is therefore seen for the purposes of this article as a fundamentally modernizing force that bases its legitimacy on the maintenance of strands of tribal tradition while embracing modernity. In this model, traditionalism is a conservative force that seeks to maintain the dominance of traditional elites and to create institutional buffers to the encroachment of laws, ideas, and institutions, which they see as incompatible with tradition. Radical movements that seek to reconstitute what they see as a tribal “Golden Age” have in practice been forced to the realization that there has been a disruption in tribal traditions. For this reason, such movements have been forced to

confront the need to “purify” their communities by removing all of those whom they believe to be contaminated (the disease metaphor is invariably used by these groups) by modernity. For radicals, traditionalists and modernizers are seen as equally symptomatic of the decline of tribal traditions, status, and the like. There is continuity to these radical attempts to reconstitute the lost “Golden Age,” which links groups from widely disparate cultures and continents into an identifiable pattern of beliefs and actions. Examples would include the Cambodian Khmer Rouge and the African Lord’s Resistance Army.<sup>13</sup> This pattern of traditionalists, modernizers, and radicals fits well into the categories that we refer to as ascriptive, aspirational, and malign varieties of each.<sup>14</sup>

The first part of this article focuses comparatively on Arminius, T. E. Lawrence, and Wasmuss. It combines into one theme questions on tribes and irregular warfare. As such, past tribal alliances with Western military regimes, no less than with royal central governments, variously resisted and welcomed influence for some political concessions. However, as the following survey shows, because broader strategic political considerations often imposed many of those engagements, the West often appeared predatory. So far, this has been the historical pattern. But we will then need to further define tribes and tribalism, and the relationship to political violence in particular. Through our analysis, it will be necessary to make the distinction between tribes and tribalism more precise.

The next part of this study expands and deepens the argument that tribalism is a manifestation of al-Qaeda’s illusory strategic alliance with the Taliban, followed by the post-9/11 narrative that tribal alliances again played an important role in both Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>15</sup> To date, most post-9/11 discussions of tribes and warfare are relatively familiar and are centered on America’s two major wars. Still, in light of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, there are open questions that now focus on al-Shabaab in Somalia, ungoverned space, and on ideological aspirants and would-be-bombers like Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (a.k.a. the “Underwear Bomber”).<sup>16</sup> So, doesn’t the “underwear bomber” case, in which a Nigerian can gain access to Arab tribes in its Yemen sanctuary, dramatically illustrate an escalation in the importance of MAT?<sup>17</sup>

Even closer to home is the case of Anwar al-Awlaki, an American product of *malign aspirational tribalism* who succeeded in making contact with al-Qaeda. Until his death, Anwar al-Awlaki became a prime English language propagandist who had remarkable success in influencing Americans to undertake malign aspirational tribal routes to terrorist violence that impacted the home front.<sup>18</sup> We also ask where are the American al-Qaeda lone wolves? With that nagging question in mind, we will undertake a brief examination of Bryant Neal Vinas and the exceptional case of the Ft. Hood shooter, Dr. Nidal Malik Hasan. What we learn may influence our views of MAT and offer new considerations for more appropriate policy responses in the future.

What’s more, tribalism poses serious questions about the nature of warfare. As a consequence, we will briefly consider future warfare. We ask, in the context of a “global war on terrorism,” with blanket troop withdrawals in Iraq, and a post-withdrawal 2014 Afghanistan, then, will the United States revert back to a more conventional strategy and force structure for national security? If so, we argue that this is exactly the wrong strategy to address aspirational tribal threats. Finally, we offer a new threat model for consideration, which explicitly considers tribalism through an irregular warfare lens. In many ways, our detailed examination of *malign aspirational*

*tribalism* (MAT)—as a result of unrelenting attacks and successes against al-Qaeda—brings us full circle from classic tribal engagements in the style of T. E. Lawrence, to the more lethal MAT threat, and the likely proliferation of lone wolf threats in the West.

So, where will all of this lead us? What seems to have changed, in short, is not the importance and question of Islamic militancy and radicalization movements so much as the notion that studies of terrorism demand a re-thinking of tribalism and modern warfare. Such an examination is at the heart of several cases considered here, not least the rise of malign aspirational tribalism. Our work should move forward, too, with the goal of revealing the nature of tribalism so as to recast our understanding of the calculus for future threat streams.

### **Tribal Auxiliaries and Alliances**

As seen in the dim light of historical clashes between conventional Western armies and irregular adversaries, Rome's confrontation with Germanic tribes in the Teutoburg Forest in A.D. 9 is a cautionary narrative. Whatever else we may say about the pre-Christian Roman Empire, it certainly used tribal auxiliaries and alliances to press beyond their frontiers. As we proceed to better understand tribalism and its explanation, as with Alexander the Great's west versus east asymmetrical campaign, it's easy to accept that Romanization was on a trajectory course to collide with tribes. From our viewpoint it was something even more; it seems that ancient Germany was in a sense the crucible in which tribalism was tested against Roman civilization.

The evidence of tribal treachery in Germany notwithstanding, we argue that the real danger lies not in tactical losses to an adversary, but in the acceptance of bad assumptions about tribal "friends." While in part this was the result of localized tribal dynamics, it also has roots in broader concepts such as "balanced opposition," which much later, helps to explain tribalism and political violence in the Middle East today.<sup>19</sup> Still, to understand both the underlying tensions of anti-Roman sentiments and Roman miscalculations about Germanic tribes, especially their potential will to resist Roman imperialism, it's important to draw from ancient sources. Tacitus suggested that the Romans wrongly believed that Germanic tribes were too preoccupied with internecine tribal disputes to unify and rise against Roman encroachments.<sup>20</sup> The final issue, in other words, is the idea that tribal cohesion eventually checked Roman military power.

It cannot be overemphasized, however, that Teutoburg Forest is an apt metaphor for asymmetric conflict. To be sure, Publius Quinctilius Varus, the Roman commander of the army of the Rhine, marched his three Roman legions deep into the heart of Germany's dark forests.<sup>21</sup> Varus marched into German tribal territory thought to be largely pacified. Fatally, Roman security rested with Arminius, a "Romanized ally," who had led tribal troops under the Roman banner.<sup>22</sup> Arminius consciously channeled Varus and his legions into unfamiliar terrain. Using the terrain to their advantage, the Germanic tribes sprang their ambush and destroyed three entire legions. The Romans suffered a decisive defeat. Varus operated without sound reconnaissance on unfamiliar terrain. In the end, the Romans proved vulnerable to treachery, and to a tribal strategy deliberately crafted to circumvent their strength.<sup>23</sup>

By considering recent tribal patterns of warfare in Afghanistan, Iraq, and as part of the broader "war on terrorism" in places like Yemen, some analysts have

consciously examined the relationship between T. E. Lawrence of Arabia and his connection to irregular tribal warfare.<sup>24</sup> For the past decade, a popular trope of irregular warfare theory among strategists is the analysis of Lawrence and his successful engagement with tribes. For example, in his recent book, *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia*, Lawrence biographer Michael Korda charted Lawrence's progressive "thinking about how the Arabs might win their war against the Turks."<sup>25</sup> In his own words, Lawrence "thought of the Arab aim, and saw that it was geographical, to occupy all Arabic-speaking lands in Asia."<sup>26</sup> Put simply, the key drivers for the cooperation between a non-Muslim, white Briton and Arab tribesmen were, in the end, about ancestral lands, power, and post-war political concessions. To sum up, geographical pragmatism, rather than ideological passions, created the post-war remapping of the Middle East—a tribal *Realpolitik*, as it were.<sup>27</sup>

Still, it's useful to comment that Lawrence pierced a tribal structure with the aim of creating an alliance that ejected the Ottoman Turks from Arab lands. In that light, it is clear that harnessing tribes, when aligned with military-political aims, proved a relatively fruitful effort. And later in our paper when we discuss the tribal awakening in Iraq, it will be clear to the reader that al-Qaeda, too, was challenged with building alliances—designed to counter Western interests in Iraq and foment wide-scale sectarian violence. We will examine in detail why that effort failed later. But now, from the benefit of our brief historical analysis, we may also preliminarily conclude that tribal alliances are not a new dynamic at all, and are a main empirical point of departure for understanding that modern warfare episodically includes building successful alliances with tribes, too. For some, tribal alliances and their insurrectionary patterns, as we can observe of the "Arab Revolt," promised that tribes remained an important feature of warfare, and is a relevant strategy for countering terrorism and political violence in this new millennium given the development of a nimble and flexible policy toward tribal actors. Even as an uncertain and relative peace settles in among the modern tribes in Iraq and elsewhere, previously contending tribes struggling over local influence will likely remain a factor for future security questions in the West. We can conclude that while ascriptive tribes have considerable short-term utility as allies, these alliances have to date proven volatile and neither durable nor completely reliable.<sup>28</sup>

These tribal relationships and alliances particularly reveal their true character when they are not part of a natural order, rather when they are created artificially and are seen as expedient. Put differently, our examination so far reveals that tribal alliances do not demand deep anthropological knowledge, but instead are circumstantial, pragmatic, and convenient. In *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, for example, author Fawaz Gerges argues persuasively that "Al-Qaeda was a marriage of convenience" between two ideological camps—between Egyptians and Saudi-Yemeni jihadists. Gerges writes figuratively that this merger was an understandable alliance between "two Islamist tribes."<sup>29</sup> From our perspective, too, it is indeed understandable that ideologies can be stretched to accommodate two ideological and divergent al-Qaeda constituencies, mostly because they share common grievances and the same Western enemy. And so, through the prism of a common enemy, we can come to understand such a union. After all, even with our brief examination of Arminius and the Germanic tribes, we observed that internecine squabbles were set aside in order to channel hostilities toward a mutual Western enemy. This, in turn, leads us to remark that al-Qaeda may very well fit the pattern of a global tribe.<sup>30</sup> In these regards, by transcending boundaries, sharing a common enemy, and—as we will

examine closer later—with MAT developing as a 21st-century phenomenon, we argue that post-ascriptive tribalism is a jihadist alternative to the more orthodox patterns of ascription with a tribe. To this day, balanced opposition in the context of the Middle East consists of coalitions of families who often adopt religious or ideological flags of convenience. In an uncompromising environment, this arrangement assures the survival of the tribe even if a significant segment of the tribe is killed.

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine a full accounting of Wilhelm Wasmuss's work with tribes in Persia during the First World War. Outside of Peter Hopkirk's magisterial volumes on the "Great Game," sources on Wasmuss fall disappointingly short. Thus, we examine Wasmuss only briefly because of his capacity to represent the nature of irregular warfare, and because of his modest successes toward building a tribal alliance that had strategic implications, despite ultimately being on the losing side of a global struggle.<sup>31</sup> And using Wasmuss underscores our point that Westerners are not excluded by their birth or religion from attempting to wage jihad—this idea takes on a new sense of urgency in the West, as the threat of homegrown tribalism allows Muslim converts to seek and ultimately join al-Qaeda against their avowed enemies.

All of this makes an elegant, if nuanced, tool of warfare—as it was with T. E. Lawrence and his Arab tribal alliance. Historian Robert F. Baumann has suggested that were Clausewitz here today he might agree that, "the passions and rationales that move states to roll the dice of war differ little from those which arouse tribes or insurgents."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, witness the current crisis and passions in Syria, and tribalism in the context of insurrectionary violence and sectarianism ongoing there, including with al-Qaeda and their affiliates.<sup>33</sup> So, tribalism is alive and well in modern Syria; however, it remains uncertain if there are any personalities as colorful as Lawrence or Wasmuss attempting to pierce the milieu in today's Syria for winning influence, decisively.

According to author Peter Hopkirk, Wasmuss "was soon to prove himself an uncomfortable thorn in the flesh of the British, and a growing threat to their presence in the region."<sup>34</sup> Most important, perhaps, owing much to the phenomenon of jihad, Wasmuss's biographer, Christopher Sykes, systematically outlined German efforts to trigger a "Pan-Islamic rising" as well.<sup>35</sup> A closer look at the failed "Holy War," however, as well as later calls for jihad toward the end of the 20th century, suggests that it is important to carefully examine the tides of popular legitimacy with such strategies.<sup>36</sup> The key historical lesson is that, while Western engineered tribal alliances have seldom been completely successful, tribal alliances formed by Muslim actors have often been more fruitful, though Lawrence may well have been a notable exception. We have observed the Ottoman Empire in this context, but more recently the rousing of ascriptive jihadist tribal passions defeated a Western army for the first time in the age of imperialism when a self-styled *Mahdi* (redeemer) in Sudan built a short-lived Islamist state. In the 1930s, the alliance of Wahhabist *Ulama* (men of religion) and the princely al-Saud family unleashed a multi-tribal jihad, which brought them to power and formed the modern state of Saudi Arabia. In the latter case, the jihadist tribesmen had to be destroyed by a counter-jihad in order to stabilize the newly created kingdom.<sup>37</sup> To further illustrate, al-Qaeda strategist Abu Musab al-Suri wrote that a jihadi campaign should not be undertaken "unless one has digested the principles, ideas and foundations [of jihad]."<sup>38</sup> All these considerations underscore the point that engagements with tribes possess varying degrees of popular legitimacy and, as such, have internal political dynamics to carefully evaluate.

So, we wrap up our examination of historical tribal alliances—as with our cases of Arminius, Lawrence, and Wasmuss—by making some sense of tribalism in terms of warfare and political violence. These ideas should not be dismissed as debates left for war college classrooms; tribalism is as relevant for studying warfare as it is for understanding terrorism and political violence in a broader social context. We consider the extent to which those tribal alliances shared a common thread, despite not always sharing the same religion, or were consummated in a Pre-Christian–Pre-Islamic era, as in the case of Alexander the Great, and with Germanic tribes in the Teutoburg Forest.<sup>39</sup> Here again, we turn to the other side of the coin—when Wasmuss paradoxically formed a tribal alliance to wage jihad with an Islamic partner against their predominantly Christian enemies. But in the case of Islam, how can significant religious differences between Muslims and Christians be overcome for the sake of forming a strategic alliance? Or is it just that our common framework for understanding political violence in the aftermath of 9/11—which seems to eschew tribalism<sup>40</sup>—has discouraged us from examining political violence through a more practical, less emotive, tribal narrative?

Rather, when explaining jihadi terrorism, Western strategists seem to focus on far more discordant and divisive questions on Islam and superficial interpretations of the Qu’ran. In part, though we are just beginning to scratch the surface of the implications of tribalism for U.S. national security, we must be prepared to accept the possibility that tribalism is an important social contract that transcends even religious factors. Tribalism is a dynamic force however, making its contours negotiable. Yet tribal ties can be harnessed with practical implications for warfare, albeit with unlikely partners. The very manner in which we reconsider tribalism in the context of terrorism may be the better narrative, and perhaps *the* critical variable that helps us re-conceptualize future threat streams.

### **9/11-Era Tribalism and Conflict: Afghanistan and Pakistan**

Whatever else we might conclude about al-Qaeda’s alliance with the Taliban in Afghanistan, it certainly had a dreamlike and scripted quality for bin Laden and his jihadists. Author Peter Bergen observed that bin Laden sought refuge in Afghanistan and was inspired to follow the metaphorical path that the “Prophet Mohammad had himself made fourteen centuries earlier to escape the Pagans of Mecca and to build his perfect Islamic society in the nearby town of Medina.”<sup>41</sup> Of greater interest, however, is the argument that much of Mohammad’s 7th-century strategy was about consolidating a base of operations in Medina, building a tribal coalition, and ultimately preparing for a final victory in Mecca. Richard A. Gabriel’s *Mohammad: Islam’s First Great General*, looks at the tribal alliances in prescient detail, and has achieved its place as a comprehensive examination of Mohammad’s Generalship. Accordingly, Gabriel notes, “. . . no single tribe or feasible coalition of tribes in the Hejaz could hope to resist Mohammad and his Muslims through force of arms.”<sup>42</sup> In his own right, then, Mohammad eventually became a powerful master of irregular warfare in his time, exactly the kind of “ideological cohesiveness and *assibiya*, or tribal solidarity” that bin Laden seemed to play out in Afghanistan—and much later in our narrative—with al-Qaeda affiliates in Yemen.<sup>43</sup> For example, both the Taliban and al-Qaeda utilize the pre-Islamic *baya* system. In this form of tribal organization, a man offers his personal *baya* (oath of allegiance) to mark his fealty to an ascriptive or aspirational tribal leader. On a larger scale, the *baya* links tribes to each other and

to central regimes (or foreign armies). The legitimacy of the practice is unquestioned as the Prophet himself used this form of alliance-building behavior. However, just as a *baya* is freely given, it can be freely withdrawn at any time, which accounts in part for the instability of both Islamic states and tribal alliances.<sup>44</sup>

These historical circumstances should directly impact our view of bin Laden through a tribalism narrative, because a by-product of “Bin Laden-ism,” which achieved little attention in the West at the time, was what Gerges called “raw tribalism,”<sup>45</sup> whereby bin Laden was able to harness passions, apply messianic religious fervor, and begin to unite disparate jihadists, while at the same time seeking Taliban protection in a tribal sanctuary. This is why bin Laden offered his *baya* to Mullah Omar, acknowledging the Taliban leader as al-Qaeda’s “tribal chief.”<sup>46</sup>

There are recent studies of tribalism in which scholars have explicitly contended that, “Islam, a civilizing force, has fallen under the spell of Islamists who are a tribalizing force.”<sup>47</sup> Still, few academics or terrorism experts have seriously considered tribalism and terrorism together in a broader study, because questions about malign tribalism are methodologically difficult, and are thus more contentious than conventional studies that settle on widely accepted themes on militant Islam. After all, we argue that malign tribalism should be classified with other destructive ideologies, which are difficult to be discredited or dismissed out-of-hand, because their patterns are so amorphous. And if we consider MAT, at its very roots it is: emotional, intensely personal, and undetectable on the surface, which is precisely why the phenomenon is potentially so dangerous.

Consider the case of Humam Khalil al-Bulawi, an al-Qaeda triple agent and aspirational suicide bomber—a loner who made an ideological conversion to al-Qaeda, and like Arminius, betrayed his supposed allies—his CIA and Jordanian “friends.”<sup>48</sup> It is important here to challenge the exclusivity of a sophisticated al-Qaeda intelligence operation, however, not just because it obscures the notion of MAT as another possible explanation, but also because it allows us to see how an ideological journey can lead directly to a tribal sanctuary in Pakistan, and then to lethal violence in Afghanistan. Again, access to the tribal areas was accepted on an ideological basis, rather than by al-Bulawi’s tribal lineage. Still, this sanguinary examination of a deceptive alliance gone bad, not only brings a discussion of warfare and tribalism to a context and level that has been almost completely ignored in most studies of political violence, but it also offers an argument for one of the most compelling and yet under-examined, and somewhat muted, aspects of Bin Laden-ism: the uniquely tribal contours of al-Qaeda’s ideological and virtual sanctuary, which inexorably becomes more important to comprehend as al-Qaeda struggles for its very existence in the tribal areas of Pakistan and elsewhere.

As the “global war on terrorism” winds down, we will likely continue to see patterns of malign aspirational tribalism. These patterns will be revealed by religious or ideological conversions and self-radicalization of those individuals alienated from their societies, and we will continue to see migratory movements to alternative and virtual tribal sanctuaries. There is the possibility of more localized Western terrorism, which will play out because it’s the safer sanctuary—the space that unmanned drones won’t likely operate in. Without serious attention to tribalism and irregular warfare, a future counterterrorism strategy will be overlooking a crucial dimension. Following from this, it’s especially pertinent to ask, then, what lessons might be learned from coalition interactions with tribes in Afghanistan?

Historical context is often brought to bear on strategy and national security decision-making. But, as the tribal experiences of Alexander the Great illustrate, tribal populations most often responded with rebellion or intermittent compliance. Yet, it is almost a certainty that tribal alliances are crucial channels through which those drawn to al-Qaeda will similarly seek to exploit local vulnerabilities. But the degree to which tribes were leveraged in Afghanistan as allies—the notable exception being the beginning of the ground war in 2001<sup>49</sup>—was not explicitly addressed publicly until 2010—a full nine years into the war in Afghanistan.

Then, *The Washington Post* elevated tribal warfare into open public discourse by highlighting “Jim Gant, the Green Beret who could win the war in Afghanistan.” Reporter Ann Scott Tyson was quite explicit that Gant, a Special Forces Major, was fighting alongside Pashtun tribesmen in Afghanistan. However, she also reported that the “U.S. military had no plans to leverage the Pashtun tribal networks against the insurgents, so Gant kept his alliances quiet.”<sup>50</sup> Even if tribal engagement was nested with a far-reaching, more coherent strategy for Afghanistan—which disappointingly it was not—by 2010, tribal engagement was far too little, and too late to affect a decisive outcome in Afghanistan. Moreover, the notion that tackling tribalism in Afghanistan as a path to decisive victory is Quixotism at best. Not surprisingly, episodic cases of tribal engagement as a strategy leading to victory in Afghanistan failed to cohere convincingly.

In turn, the public discourse over Gant’s “Tribal Engagement Strategy”<sup>51</sup> instead exposed two opposing viewpoints for fighting in Afghanistan: employing the “Hearts and Minds” strategy of classic popular war, meaning counterinsurgency, or alternatively applying a less ground-centric, counterterrorism approach. Vice President Joseph Biden favored a combination of Special Operations Forces and drones—decidedly, a counterterrorism design that was to focus more on remnants of al-Qaeda, rather than the broader Taliban-Pashtun insurgency.<sup>52</sup> Consistent with the distinctions of two such strategies, it is fundamentally too difficult to square tribal engagement with that of a counterinsurgency strategy, unless there is a comprehensive process for carefully measuring and managing tribal engagements on a grand scale. In other words, choosing, arming, and cultivating the right tribal partners has to be surgical and precise, or it risks undermining the central government, or the tribe in the next valley, which is more often than not, equally as dangerous.<sup>53</sup> In short, large-scale tribal engagement has to be managed as a political-military priority, or it is best not done at all.

Beyond the usual rhetoric that tribes are the dominant social system in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen, almost entirely missing from existing terrorism studies is a serious explanation of why counterterrorism policies do not explicitly address tribal engagement as part of a long-term strategy. Peter Bergen makes the case that even in the beginning of our ongoing war in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance was too narrowly focused on going after bin Laden, rather than being “a strategic partner to defeat al-Qaeda and the Taliban.”<sup>54</sup>

In any event, these points are now moot in the context of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. With troop withdrawals precipitously announced by the Obama Administration, and with all eyes on post-2014 Afghanistan, drone strikes in the tribal areas of Pakistan are still favored over any coherent or broad-based leveraging of tribal alliances.<sup>55</sup> Still, what remains as a tribal option for U.S. strategic planners is finding the means toward exploiting the self-defeating strategy of militants that push the limits of their own tribal engagements. Put differently, there is a tipping point

where the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other militants trigger a cycle of insurrectional violence against themselves. We will later examine the closest analogue to this phenomenon in Iraq by examining the U.S. experiences with Sunni tribes. But this leads to another more pressing question as far as terrorism and tribalism is concerned: not so much how coalitions can partner with tribes, but rather learning how better to counter terrorists and their affiliates from building their own tribal alliances. Maybe, this path is the better course to follow.

It is worth emphasizing, as noted above, that al-Qaeda is susceptible—in reverse—to a lethal process that David Kilcullen in *The Accidental Guerrilla* calls “rejection.” This virulent dynamic is summarized when, for example, al-Qaeda moves into tribal areas, builds their alliances, and predictably triggers a hostile Western response, whereby al-Qaeda “exploits” the tribal backlash against their Western interventionary adversaries.<sup>56</sup> This interventionary cycle happened throughout 3,000 years of Afghan history, back to Alexander the Great, the British, the Soviet Union, and eventually with today’s milieu in Afghanistan, but it follows a familiar historical pattern: the foreigner becomes bogged down by tribal alliances and by the often-incomprehensible particularities of tribalism.<sup>57</sup> It is crucial to remember that Arabs in Pakistan’s Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are foreigners too, and perhaps have overreached with their tribal hosts to a certain extent; this is an al-Qaeda vulnerability.<sup>58</sup> Above all, this dynamic is at the very heart of tribalism, and Kilcullen references the powerful influences of tribal tradition, which elucidates our point: whether it occurs with a counterinsurgency, or with a counterterrorism strategy, tribalism will be a pattern that has to be considered, and in some cases, exploited by both sides of the fight.<sup>59</sup>

Parallel to rejection based on Western pressure is rejection based on overreach; the temptation to too quickly impose radical versions of Islamic law, to extort businesses or tribal elites for money, or to resort to arbitrary arrests and executions. These make tribes receptive to the intervention of foreign forces who then fail to either comprehend local cultures or to be indiscriminate in their choice of targets between local tribesmen and jihadist fighters. This in turn makes the same tribes susceptible to the return of the very same forces that they had sought Western cooperation to eject. Afghan tribal relations with the Taliban after the American intervention is a case in point.

Such an approach that overreaches with Afghan tribes would, of course, pose a grave danger for those who push beyond the “tipping” point. At some level too, there must be an effective counter narrative to go along with any U.S. efforts to accelerate a tribal interventionary backlash against al-Qaeda. Yet this sort of unconventional back and forth with tribes may still require a complementary variant of the U.S. interventionary strategy that worked in 2001: fewer conventional forces, a small footprint of Special Operations Forces left in place to work with Afghan partners,<sup>60</sup> and balanced with limited counterterrorism operations and discreet, surgical tribal engagements designed to co-opt and reward key tribes that will neutralize al-Qaeda. A primary value of this strategy is that fluid alliance relationships are traditional among Afghan tribes. These tribes are conservative by nature and highly suspicious of innovations (*bida*) of any kind. This makes tribesmen resistant to non-traditional tactical approaches in the military sense, as well as changes in their understandings of law, of gender, etc. On the other hand, the best possible outcome for the Taliban-Pashtun insurgency is some kind of political arrangement for the cessation of hostilities, because strategists are already signaling the abandonment of any

notion of counterinsurgency operations on an appreciable scale. In fact, the current U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine anywhere in the world is at risk.<sup>61</sup> The reaction to these kinds of open strategy discussions does little to deter the Taliban and al-Qaeda; rather, it is probably enough to lead them to escalate attacks now in order to gain as much ground as possible. This likely provides leverage for any potential peace negotiations or post-war political concessions.

So it goes, too, while we are debating a post-2014 strategy, our adversaries in the tribal areas have already waged a lethal and protracted tribal struggle. Alarmingly, traditional tribal leaders were systematically destroyed by the Taliban in some places, and were replaced by more “compliant” tribal leaders.<sup>62</sup> It seems that the Taliban have executed a lethal tribal campaign, while the Western coalition dismissed any serious notion of a tribal strategy beyond crucially effective drone strikes that raise the cost of any al-Qaeda gatherings or open training in their tribal sanctuary, at the risk of increasing alienation of local tribesmen. In covering that tribal ground, this paper argues another important point. We assert that the putative risk when all is said and done is not as much about whether militants hiding in tribal sanctuaries will be able to plan and execute attacks in Afghanistan, as it is about those militants that leave for the West or go to other sanctuaries to join al-Qaeda affiliates. As Jessica Stern labeled it, perhaps the greater concern, then, is the “protean” nature of our adversaries, and how they will adapt. Worse still, Stern reminds us that Mir Aimal Kansi’s 1993 lone wolf attack against CIA employees in Langley, Virginia, meets our definition of malign tribalism at some level.<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, a logical consequence of post-ascriptive tribalism is that the al-Qaeda movement, while leaving in place an uncertain constituency in Afghanistan and Pakistan, will seek a greater appeal beyond the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas). Though the Manichean worldviews of the Taliban and al-Qaeda hold-overs will likely persist at some level, we suspect that those extremists that break out and get to the West will be even better trained and more radicalized than was Kansi. In the end, tribes still matter. Our re-conceptualization of tribalism matters even more: radicalization waged under the banner of a slowing but still relevant global movement is a consequence of its very survival. In addition, the de-territorialization of al-Qaeda in the FATA puts al-Qaeda under pressure to either move to other sanctuaries or to quietly reconstitute in the West.

### **9/11-Era Tribalism and Conflict: Iraq**

If Afghanistan’s original *mujahedeen* spread like an “Islamist contagion”<sup>64</sup> in the aftermath of Afghanistan’s 1980s-era anti-Soviet jihad, what, then, are the global implications of leftover jihadist fighters from the war in Iraq? And having established a framework for thinking about tribes in Afghanistan, how, then, does our examination of tribes square with the war in Iraq? Briefly, we will demonstrate that tribes and tribalism in Iraq are indicative of our point that the de-territorialization of al-Qaeda in Iraq is a direct result of their overreach, and illustrative of just how far al-Qaeda’s excessive use of violence and provocation led to their own destruction. Moreover, de-territorialization is not the same as destruction. Violence is fungible—forced out of one redoubt it will not disappear. Rather, it will reappear in other territories, often in more lethal and less detectable form. This is the deadly logic of the emergence of lone wolf terrorism emerging from the end game in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ultimately, al-Qaeda's missteps set in motion their eventual implosion in Iraq. There were, of course, instinctive and effective U.S. responses to the tribal backlash, which exploited al-Qaeda's miscalculations. Only then did a new generation of U.S. military talent, freed from the indelible markings of a poorly conceived conventional military strategy—and their hunt for non-existent weapons of mass destruction—come to appreciate tribes as a crucial ally.

So far this study has implied that an examination of al-Qaeda's tribal strategy in Iraq might reveal useful threads for a broader terrorism narrative. Indeed, we agree that those foreign fighters who have fought in Iraq may live to fight on other battlefields. For example, Peter Bergen and Alec Reynolds argued relatively early on that foreign fighters drawn to Iraq would eventually seek out other fields for continuing their violence.<sup>65</sup> More alarmingly still, approximately four thousand foreign fighters were motivated to make their way to Iraq to kill its foreign U.S. invaders.<sup>66</sup> But as suggested throughout this paper, these kinds of alliances are key ingredients for making better-trained terrorists who are ripe for exporting political violence. Notwithstanding the lessons about leftover foreign fighters from Afghanistan's first jihad, the real problem in Iraq was the strategic alliance of al-Qaeda with Sunni tribes. To be sure, Sunni tribes underwent an artificial re-tribalization process, which was a direct result of the power vacuum created by the U.S. invasion in 2003, which left them vulnerable to the "Shi'a Awakening," which for the first time allowed the Shi'ite majority to reclaim the power that Sunnis had monopolized since Iraqi Independence following WWII.<sup>67</sup> In other words, the U.S. invasion of Iraq disturbed the traditional tribal equilibrium, and al-Qaeda shrewdly aligned with Sunni tribes,<sup>68</sup> who rightly feared the emergence of the Shi'ite majority to positions of power. Taken together, one sees the danger of a disturbed social system that unleashed improbable mergers between otherwise disparate groups. Those violent extremists coalesced purely because they shared a mutual enemy, which is inherently a manifestation of tribal particularism.<sup>69</sup>

Before turning to investigate tribalism outside of Iraq, namely those drawn to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, this study needs to pause to finish our discussion of al-Qaeda's overreach in Iraq. Following from this, and especially important in terms of future regional policy calculus, we will also provide critical commentary on the implications of the U.S. overreach in Iraq. While this study has established the crucial point that al-Qaeda's strategy in Iraq proved largely counterproductive, other scholars are left to more closely examine the reasons why military planners missed so widely on implementing a tribal engagement strategy at the outset of the Iraq campaign. In the end, the U.S. exploited al-Qaeda's missteps, but it fundamentally miscalculated the importance of tribes early on, so perhaps the U.S. was more lucky than good.<sup>70</sup>

Yet, the future of Iraq is still an open question, and more time is needed to elapse before final conclusions may be drawn. But Iraq already seems to have compelled the U.S. to begin an inexorable, deliberate military disengagement from the Middle East. Will such a U.S. drift away from the region increase the potential for malign tribalism elsewhere in the region? And, what, then, does it mean when some of these fighters break out to exploit tribal passions beyond Iraq, because they have a shared enemy? And what has al-Qaeda learned about the numbing consequential cycle of reprisals and counter-reprisals of political violence against tribes? In point of fact, al-Qaeda affiliates in Yemen seem to be leveraging and building tribal alliances, and they have opened a new front.<sup>71</sup> There is little evidence to suggest

that al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula will make the same kind of mistakes that were made with tribes in Iraq, which means that counterterrorism measures must exploit al-Qaeda mistakes.

Although lessons on insurgency and raw tribalism from Thucydides' era are explicitly sparse, some historical comparisons are worth considering. Words like "quagmire" and "slippery slope" were not only used to compare U.S. interventions ranging from Iraq and Afghanistan to Vietnam and Korea, but they can also be used to also to describe ancient examples of strategic overreach. Not surprisingly, historians have compared the ancient Athenian invasion of Sicily during the Peloponnesian War to the U.S. intervention in Iraq.<sup>72</sup> Correspondingly, at a time when the U.S. had not suffered from any major attacks in the homeland since 2001, the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, and opened a new military theater of operation as part of its broader "War on Terrorism." In short, some suggest that Sicily and Iraq are a metaphor for several ideas linked to our narrative: First, al-Qaeda and their affiliates will continue to exploit any U.S. miscalculations, such as they attempted to do with the U.S. intervention in Iraq, much like the Spartans did to the Athenians in Sicily. Secondly, the U.S. interventionary experience in Iraq—regardless of true U.S. intentions—reinforces a persistent narrative that the U.S. is attacking Islam. Thirdly, it demonstrates that al-Qaeda exercises remarkable operational flexibility for seizing strategic opportunities with tribes. Finally, al-Qaeda defeated itself in Iraq, as can be argued for the Athenians in ancient Sicily.

But Iraq may still be interpreted as a victory for al-Qaeda, because it energized insurrectional goals elsewhere, which already seem to be budding in Yemen. So, these reflections all give credence to our theme that tribal patterns pose challenges and opportunities for political violence, and those charged with countering political violence. In the end, a central element of any counter-strategy must consider tribal dynamics at some level. As such, leveraging tribes persuasively depends on a sophisticated, properly crafted strategy, and may very well be a decisive factor for undermining remnants of al-Qaeda.

### **On Tribalism and Irregular Warfare: A "New Trinity" Model**

Yemen can be seen as a convergence of our re-conceptualized definition of malign tribalism and political violence, and can be summed up as a post-Iraq progression. Although no model is a panacea, it is a beginning point for considering undercurrents of irregular warfare, which are manifest in other places where the state is weak and inherently tribal.<sup>73</sup> Yemen may be considered as a case study by which we can theorize about more MAT in the future. It not only fits our narrative, but it is illustrative of a harmful imbalance of a weak state with tribes as the dominant social fabric. Although not explicitly covered in this article, we argue that the lessons learned regarding tribalism in the Middle East would be of preeminent value in dealing with conflicts in Africa. The contingent is emerging as the key theater of U.S. operations in the post-Afghanistan era. Paradoxically, even when the weak state and its extremist actors are contained, or when the tribes "reject" a malign tribal influence, the West still has to contend with self-radicalized violent extremists who may resort to violence to achieve their ends. This model can just as easily be applied to Somalia, Pakistan, and other places where malign tribalism can be grafted to a dominant tribal landscape.

Still, as we have stressed throughout this article, the West must develop more sophisticated partnerships, which means that in the aftermath of Iraq and

Afghanistan, the U.S. must work tirelessly with states and their security and intelligence services to accelerate the process of “rejection” in any ungoverned space that may be used as a sanctuary. In this respect, it is both feasible and vital for the U.S. to develop a model that will “red flag” malign tribal threats emerging primarily from failed states and ungoverned spaces. Although unilateral action still remains an option for the West, as the bin Laden raid demonstrated, there are socio-political consequences for such actions, and U.S. national security decision-makers must inevitably weigh and consider all options.<sup>74</sup> Working with partners more discreetly is likely more acceptable than large-scale U.S. military operations. In a time when many tend to regard U.S. unilateralism as a negative extension of power, such options remain available in any future U.S. strategic calculus. In places like Pakistan, and even Yemen, ungoverned and tribal space often straddle national boundaries. As a result, interventionary decisions are internationalized and complex, yet tribal affiliation is the social identity that matters most on-the-ground, so it is there that malign actors have to be relentlessly pressured.

### The “New Trinity”

To the extent that the reader is now better prepared to recognize that this line of inquiry demands serious attention, it is time to better explain why this should be so. Thus we resort to our version of a “New Trinity” model<sup>75</sup> (see Figure 1).

Consider that geography, historical circumstances, and tribal affiliation are often constrained to a certain extent by political boundaries, although as we have seen throughout the Islamic world, these boundaries are artificial and thus less important than those that are based on ascription with a tribe. At the same time, because these areas of the world nonetheless progressed as nation-states, we can still consider the “Clausewitzian Trinity” as a useful way to think about irregular warfare, and to think about malign tribalism, too. Edward J. Villacres and Christopher Bassford, in a *Parameters* article, “Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity,” wrote that Clausewitz defined the essential trinitarian parts as: “primordial violence, hatred and enmity; the play of chance and probability; and war’s subordination to rational policy.”<sup>76</sup> In addition, Villacres and Bassford highlight a more recent interpretation that defines the trinity as the “people, army, and government.”<sup>77</sup> These definitions are incomplete for our purposes without some additional context on tribalism. Rather than learning the essential parts of Clausewitz’s theory and defining what war is, at first glance, a somewhat useful way to understand that where societal patterns are essentially rooted to tribalism, and when the state is considered weak, groups like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula will see strategic opportunities.

Before proceeding further with our model, it is prudent to provide a review of the most important terms we will use. The first term that requires revisiting is our specific re-conceptualization of an ideology: malign tribalism. Recall that we define malign tribalism as an idiosyncratic ideology that mimics primordial ties that would normally fit an anthropological definition of a tribe. Both ascriptive and aspirational forms of tribalism may emerge in malign forms. As such, we make the assumption that members acting out these ideologies would reject our assertion of tribalism; rather they would argue they are religiously inspired, and defenders of their faith. Inherent in such a claim however, is the conception of *umma* (community of believers), which was seen by the Prophet as the ultimate all-Muslim aspirational. A theological discussion here about jihadists only serves as an accelerant to fuel their



Figure 1. Tribalism and the “new trinity” (color figure available online).

quixotic pursuit for legitimacy, which we find counterproductive.<sup>78</sup> In short, our definition of ideology corresponds to a malignant and corrupted strain of tribalism. Those adherents of violent extremist movements—like Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab—were inspired and drawn in to a malign transnational tribe in Yemen: a weak state with ungoverned and distinguishable tribal areas, where our definition of a “Trinitarian” imbalance holds true. Even if ascriptive tribal identities in places like Yemen are conceived as a traditional societal pattern, they can be both constraining and enabling. To be sure, once mobilized and protected in tribal areas, non-state extremist actors—like the late Anwar al-Awlaki—tend to be deeply embedded and suspiciously independent of whatever ascriptive tribes were responsible for supporting them and, therefore, they are not easily dismantled, and must therefore be targeted.<sup>79</sup>

The case of Anwar al-Awlaki raises some controversial issues, which pit national security interests against core American values such as the right of free speech and the right to trial by jury as protected by the U.S. Constitution. Al-Awlaki was an American citizen who converted to radical Islam and as shall be considered later in this paper, in a rare achievement was allowed access to the heart of the aspirational structure of al-Qaeda central. He was a propagandist in the English language, and was remarkably influential. Yet, he never took arms or directly engaged in battle with Americans. Before 9/11, he would probably have been placed on a watch list and monitored closely by intelligence services. A U.S. drone missile reportedly killed him on September 30, 2011. The legal framework for the action has significant ramifications for lone wolves seeking to join aspirational tribes. In a memorandum dated June 2010, the killing of American citizens abroad was determined to be in accord with U.S. law “only if it were not feasible to take him alive.”<sup>80</sup>

The final concept that requires elaboration in terms of our model is the social phenomenon of aspirational tribalism—harnessing the passions of a globalized

movement—where those seeking membership with a malign transnational tribe like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula are subsequently trained in ungoverned tribal space in the hopes that they can eventually attack targets in the West. Our contention is that, in the long run, if those adherents that are inspired to make such a journey are either contained or killed in those weak states, then, it is indeed a localized problem. This, however, does not account for homegrown terrorism.<sup>81</sup>

The final caveat that should be taken into consideration is the downstream effect of successfully thwarting extremist movements in places like Yemen. In spite of the fact that counterterrorist efforts in Yemen might prove successful, MAT can still develop virtually through ideological messaging via social media channels to those who seek membership. The other threat to consider is those who self-radicalize and already reside in the West. Accordingly, emphasis must be placed on preventing lone wolf actors such as Major Malik Hasan, the Fort Hood attacker, which demands that we should expand future research on a more detailed examination of this solitary manifestation of MAT. Still, our “New Trinity” model seems to hold for Hasan too; al-Awlaki inspired Hasan to act from his tribal sanctuary in Yemen, with all of the dynamics associated with local tribes, a weak state, and a malign ideology taking root.<sup>82</sup> This trend of lone wolf actors, however, may very well prove to be exceedingly difficult to predict and to stop. If our examination of Yemen and tribal dynamics through a Clausewitzian lens challenges more conventional ideas of tribalism in the Middle East and Afghanistan, this current trend may be the next chapter in the threat narrative, but it will certainly play out in the West.

### **Malign Aspirational Tribalism: American Lone Wolves, Al-Qaeda,<sup>83</sup> and Beyond**

Our article focuses almost exclusively on tribalism, both ascriptive and aspirational, as these concepts apply to Islamist violence. Given the U.S. post-9/11 attention on jihadist threats—see for example the FBI’s list of most wanted terrorists discussed below where 28 of 29 fugitives are Muslim jihadists—this is only natural in a security oriented study. Yet before examining Islamist lone wolves, we must pause to note emerging theoretical patterns in the study of global lone wolf and autonomous cell terrorism in the light of the “New Tribalisms.”

When Texas Klansman Louis Beam wrote his seminal essay “Leaderless Resistance” for an audience of American radical right-wingers,<sup>84</sup> the tactic was already long in use in that milieu. Unknown to the radical right of the day, a long-active serial killer named Joseph Paul Franklin had been operating for more than a decade.<sup>85</sup> Franklin joined the National Socialist White People’s Party (NSWPP) in 1966.<sup>86</sup> He became a lone wolf practicing leaderless resistance by circumstances rather than choice as no leader could long tolerate his malevolent presence. His coast to coast shooting rampage included such disparate targets as interracial couples jogging in Seattle, Vernon Jordan, a civil rights leader and later presidential advisor to Bill Clinton, and most famously the publisher of *Hustler* magazine Larry Flynt, whose transgressions included publishing photographs of interracial sex. He was captured and his crimes became public in 1980. William Pierce, a long-time American National Socialist leader wrote a novel, *Hunter*, which was dedicated to Franklin and which presented Franklin’s tactics as models for emulation.<sup>87</sup>

Franklin was a successful killer but a poor terrorist. Terrorism as Franklin practiced it was certainly leaderless resistance, but it was also *messageless* resistance. He

could operate over decades because of his constantly shifting locales, weapons, and targets. Law enforcement did not link the shootings, treating them as individual local criminal acts. The public was unaware that an active terrorist was attempting to terrorize them and likeminded would-be terrorists were equally unaware of Franklin's message. Few actually read Beam's essay, although it was Beam who gave the term "leaderless resistance" to the world of terrorism, where it has been adopted by a wide array of belief systems well beyond the radical right. But it was *Hunter's* glorification of Franklin that attracted an international group of terrorist killers to emulate his example, albeit with better results in terms of transmitting a message.

This brief consideration of non-Islamic lone wolves yields two points of comparison with the Muslim actors that we have considered thus far. First, in both sets of actors, a radicalization process is followed by actual contact with much admired domestic leaders as in the radical right or distant overseas fighters as in jihadist terrorism. Whether it is the ideological heirs of Joseph Franklin, Bryant Neal Vinas, or Anwar al-Awlaki, the encouragement of foreign fighters both energizes and legitimizes the violence of homegrown lone wolf or autonomous cells. Second, and more important, there appears to be a vast difference in the intent and implementation of terrorist acts between the Islamic and right-wing cases. With Islamic lone wolf or autonomous cell violence, the aim is for the epic—spectacular operations with large body counts. With suicide terrorism (self-martyring operations), the 7/7 attacks on the British subway system, or Bryant Neal Vinas' providing information to al-Qaeda on the Long Island railroad, the emphasis is on spectacular attacks to send messages that have global resonance. While not all, or even most, Islamic lone wolves intend to die in the operation, escape does not seem to be much of a consideration either. These attacks are one-offs, without any thought given to an encore performance once the terrorist has struck his or her appointed target. It is the act, not the actor, that is paramount. Terrorism is more a form of art, then, a statement with a lasting message.<sup>88</sup>

By contrast, non-Islamic terrorists largely focus on longevity at the cost of the spectacular. Even when the act of terrorism is large scale such as the Oklahoma City bombing (an outstanding example of autonomous cell violence), Timothy McVeigh did his best to escape. Terror in this sense is seen as an ongoing process. The purification of the race or tribe—both ascriptive and aspirational as we have described—is thus seen as a long and difficult process rather than the Islamist vision of victory as being in reach. Indeed, throughout the Islamic world, with the fall of the dictators in the Arab Spring and the inexorable American withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, the Islamists' optimism seems more than justified.

At the same time, largely focusing on disrupting and destroying terrorist networks overseas, for all intents and purposes, the U.S. has not widely faced the negative consequences of their successful counterterrorism strategy in the homeland. Still, much remains an open question, because al-Qaeda and others are advocating individual acts of jihad and lone wolf attacks in the West.<sup>89</sup> So, what, then, are the deeper implications of MAT in the U.S. homeland? And where are the American al-Qaeda lone wolves? Attempting to consider such motivations for political violence is often a complex undertaking, but particularly so when the individuals under examination are drawn to a terrorist organization that arguably takes on the characteristics of a global tribe—a concept which is so strikingly alien to American cultural and sociological norms.

Not surprisingly, lone wolf actors are now indeed part of the U.S. post-9/11 milieu. Moreover, American lone wolf Major Nidal Hasan not only acted out violently based on his own beliefs, but al-Qaeda's American born propagandist Azzam al-Amriki (Adam Gadahn) praised Hasan's actions. Gadahn is not to be confused with the now deceased al-Qaeda English language propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki—whose e-mail correspondence helped to inspire Major Hasan's murder of 13 and wounding of 29 U.S. soldiers at Ft. Hood, Texas, on November 9, 2009. This raises some troubling questions in terms of lone wolf terrorism. In one of those e-mails, Hasan wrote to al-Awlaki: "I can't wait to join you in Heaven."<sup>90</sup> And Gadahn praised Hasan as "the ideal role model for every repentant Muslim in the Armies of the unbelievers and apostate regimes."<sup>91</sup> If Major Hasan's religious beliefs hold true, al-Awlaki awaits him in paradise. As to "the American" (literally "al-Amriki" in Arabic), little is known about him. The FBI, in a request for help, writes on its website:

We are urgently seeking information on the identity of the person pictured here—a self-proclaimed American jihadist using the alias 'Azzam the American, aka 'Azzam Al-Amriki . . .

He may currently be located outside the United States.

We hope you might recognize him from his voice, his body language, or the style and content of his speech.<sup>92</sup>

Al-Amriki is believed to be hiding in the tribal areas in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions.<sup>93</sup>

Still, conclusively understanding motivations for religio-political violence is especially difficult, but particularly so in the case of Major Nidal Hasan, a U.S.-born service member with no history of political violence. Frustratingly, understanding Hasan's motivations for the Fort Hood killing are still not entirely clear. Along those same lines, why he was drawn to Anwar al-Awlaki's jihadist message may never be fully revealed either, but it does seem that his violence was idiosyncratic, deeply personal, and conformed to a worldview that was influenced by his direct contact with al-Awlaki.<sup>94</sup> It has been suggested that a strong anti-Islamic bias exists at Ft. Hood and perhaps throughout the military, which may have been a radicalizing factor as well.<sup>95</sup> Given the significant role of al-Awlaki's propagandist messaging, linked to his direct provocations against the West, it is necessary to change gears to comparatively examine one other violent U.S. actor drawn to al-Qaeda's lethal message.

Rather than making a tepid case that Bryant Neal Vinas<sup>96</sup> was a lone wolf along the same lines as Hasan, we will examine the most powerful spark in the mind of Vinas, which brings us circuitously back to our earlier "New Trinity" model, malign tribalism and the late radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. Simply put, the connective tissue between two unrelated U.S. cases was al-Awlaki's inspirational messaging. Among the most powerful sparks for Vinas to take action were al-Awlaki's Internet teachings. Vinas watched and listened intently to al-Awlaki lectures that he found on YouTube. As a fellow salifist,<sup>97</sup> al-Awlaki's message seemed credible and coherent. Vinas knew the vagaries of the philosophical underpinnings of violent jihad from his own self-study. He knew of the 1960s-era Muslim Brotherhood religious scholar Sayyid Qutb; however, he was unfamiliar with more recent intellectual studies and writings available on-line, such as the teachings of al-Qaeda strategist Abu Musab al-Suri.<sup>98</sup> Curiously, al-Awlaki's message to wage a self-directed jihad in

the U.S. may have resonated with Hasan, but that still remains an open question. Other social and psychological factors pre-dating his contact with al-Awlaki were in play in this case.

Nevertheless, it was al-Awlaki—an American who had no illusions about the level of Islamic education among his target audience—who made clear and unambiguous appeals for English-speaking Muslims to wage defensive jihad in places like Afghanistan. For Vinas, those appeals were firmly grounded in his limited understanding of the Qu'ran and *hadiths*. Vinas was impressed that al-Awlaki was bold enough to openly advocate violent jihad. Moreover, Vinas thought al-Awlaki was gifted with an ability to leave a long and lasting impression on his audience. For this reason, due in large part to al-Awlaki's lectures, Vinas aspired to become a salafist militant in order to fight and defend other Muslims from oppression overseas. In the case of Vinas, his radicalization was indeed slow, and though he trained with militant actors in Pakistan, he was not necessarily on a trajectory toward lone wolf terrorism. From what we do know about the phenomenon of lone wolf terrorism, however, it's clear that the idiosyncrasies of Vinas' pattern suggests that there always existed a potential for lone wolf political violence, if the right influence had been exerted. Moreover, his attraction first to the overarching tribe of the Islamic *ummah* and then to the more focused membership in foreign salafist organizations is a clear example of malign ascriptive tribalism as we have described it. In addition, both Major Hasan and Bryant Neal Vinas responded to propaganda that emanated from a tribal sanctuary and directly led to violence. To sum up, this brief examination of al-Awlaki's propaganda demonstrated his influence over—at the very least—two solitary violent actors. To the extent that we have recognized that tribes and tribalism have distinct social patterns, this brief line of inquiry seems to confirm that tribal sanctuaries matter, too. While al-Qaeda's failure to concentrate exclusively on lone wolf messaging may signal strategic shortcomings—a consistent weakness since 9/11—al-Qaeda's challenge is still its own survival in tribal sanctuaries, which often competes with and distracts from provoking lone wolf violence in the West. In the final analysis, then, though time favors the jihadists, lone wolf terrorism does not pose an existential threat, and counter-sanctuary strategies in places like Yemen seem to be aggressively neutralizing malign ascriptive tribalism at its very roots.

## Conclusions

In this article, we strenuously argued that an examination of aspirational political violence throughout history reveals that counterterrorism approaches have not yet been fully recast to distinguish tribalism and terrorism together as a compelling narrative. On the other hand, we demonstrated that tribalism not only has been an insufficiently recognized aspect of counterterrorism strategies against al-Qaeda and other forms of terrorist violence, but should policymakers and practitioners ignore malign tribalism, they do so with some risk to Western security. To restate our central argument, malign tribalism is rooted in religio-political violence and expedient tribal alliances—in places like Yemen, Somalia, and perhaps most alarmingly, London, Stockholm, Texas, and New York. It is in the wake of a decade of post-9/11 warfare and a relentless Western counterterrorism strategy, then, that we see an extra-tribalism dynamic come into better focus, which leads to the likelihood of increasing lone wolf and autonomous cell forms of political violence.

Having established a viable model for re-conceptualizing malign tribalism in places like Yemen, this study demonstrated that where a harmful imbalance of a weak state with tribes is the dominant social structure, jihadists—such as al-Awlaki or William Pierce—can message would-be lone wolves and draw in other aspirational terrorists such as Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab. In either case, tribalism matters for U.S. long-term security interests in foreign sanctuaries, as well as in the U.S. homeland. The U.S. buys down risk by front-end analysis of tribal dynamics, and by putting intense pressure with partners on ascriptive tribes overseas that host al-Qaeda, their affiliates and aspirants. The other side of the coin is the back-end work, and though not explicitly addressed in this article, we mean aggressive law enforcement-intelligence cooperation in the homeland, and with cooperative foreign partners, which seems to have been the case with American al-Qaeda aspirant Bryant Neal Vinas. And as viewed in the dim light of history, tribal alliances are both necessary and cautionary. Tribal alliances are necessary because such strategic relationships can be a relevant part of a counterterrorism strategy by surgically going after a mutual enemy on the ground, though such alliances are often neither durable nor reliable. While we used the Teutoburg Forest as a cautionary historical analogue, because it was the crucible that tested the durability of a Western alliance with its tribal partners in ancient history, exactly the same dynamic can be seen at play in the disastrous U.S. intervention in the Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s. In that light, harnessing tribal power may begin hopefully, but can still end in disaster.

Before moving to investigate U.S. experiences with tribes in Afghanistan and Iraq, namely those drawn to al-Qaeda's narrative, the study paused to consider defining our re-conceptualized forms of tribalism. At the apex of aspirational tribes that constitute a security threat to the U.S. is al-Qaeda. We argued that not all aspirational tribes constituted a threat; however, a malign aspirational tribalism dynamic is the incubator for lone wolf actors to emerge at some undetermined time, and for the establishment of autonomous cells within the aspirant's country of origin. Put another way, we set aside the constraining language of anthropology and settled on the idea that al-Qaeda and their affiliates are an idiosyncratic and insurrectional strain of tribalism, which is primordial to its core and turned dangerously outward.

Another contributing factor to misguided U.S. approaches with counterterrorism strategies and tribes appears to be the tendency to do too little, too late. It is not that U.S. Special Forces did not do some excellent work with tribes in Afghanistan, for example, but large-scale tribal engagement was not managed as a political-military priority, and counterterrorism policy does not explicitly address tribal dynamics. As a result, the United States is left hoping that its adversaries overreach with tribes and that they suffer backlash from their excesses, as they did in Iraq. Yet, we argued that this sort of unconventional back and forth with tribes may still require a small footprint of U.S. Special Operations Forces left in place to work with indigenous partners,<sup>99</sup> balanced with limited counterterrorism operations and discreet, surgical tribal engagements designed to co-opt and reward key tribes that will neutralize any remnants of a resurgent al-Qaeda. With Iraq still an open question, and the success of the al-Anbar Awakening notwithstanding, Iraq may still be interpreted as a victory for al-Qaeda, because it energized insurrectional goals elsewhere, as seen in Yemen. So as we have argued, all of these reflections give credence to our theme that tribal patterns pose challenges and opportunities for political violence, and those charged with countering political violence.

Whatever else we have illuminated about tribes and warfare, jihadists like Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, Humam Khalil al-Bulawi, Mir Aimal Kansi, Major Nidal Hasan, al-Awlaki, and American al-Qaeda aspirant Bryant Neal Vinas each exhibited some symptoms of malign tribalism, interwoven with their own complex personal psychologies. Our thoughts on the American actors like Hasan should be a warning, then, that incipient autonomous jihadist cells or lone wolf forms of political violence are out there somewhere, incubating in the West. Yet there is reason for optimism. Despite revealing our conclusions that lone wolf terrorism is inevitable at some level, jihadist lone wolf terrorism is mostly a strategy of desperation, and the result of unrelenting U.S. pressure on al-Qaeda in tribal areas overseas. This is still the most potent field for training budding jihadists. In turn, if we do indeed find the U.S. in a protracted struggle against the forces of malign tribalism, the U.S. will need to depart from its more conventional strategies in favor of unconventional forms of warfare.

### Final Policy Thoughts

In the end, a central element of any successful counter-strategy must now consider tribal dynamics at some increased level. This study's exploration and analysis of the impact that tribes and tribalism can have on counter-terrorist policy has opened the door for more expansive studies. Strategic thinking can now consider tribalism and terrorism together, and though it's more unconventional than widely accepted ideas about militant Islam, it also provides a framework that even vindicates elements of Clausewitzian thought, when applied to patterns of terrorism in contested tribal space. After all, we argued that malign tribalism should be considered like any other potentially destructive ideologies, which means historical lessons on irregular warfare and the Cold War are still relevant, too. In closing, leveraging tribes persuasively depends on a sophisticated, properly crafted strategy, and may very well be the decisive factor for undermining any remnants of al-Qaeda.

### Notes

1. Arthur Weigall, *Alexander the Great* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), 274.
2. *Ibid.*, 275.
3. Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
4. Hanna Batutu, *The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements in Iraq* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978). One suspects that if U.S. policy makers had attempted to read this 1200+ page tome they would have been less sanguine in their expectations for a post-Saddam Iraq.
5. Discussion with Jeffrey Kaplan, The name of the advisor is withheld.
6. In this they are correct. The Prophet Mohammad was a product of the tribalized culture of 6th-century Arabia who envisioned an Islamized world in terms of a single, vast, unified tribe. For modern variants, see Roxanne Leslie Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from Al-Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
7. David Harrison, *The White Tribe of South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). The book became the basis for a BBC series of interviews with members of the tribe. Jeffrey Kaplan and Leonard Weinberg, *The Emergence of a Euro-American Radical Right* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Stuart J. Kaufman, *The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

8. Radical racial and ethnic nationalisms are simultaneously ascriptive and aspirational. They are first ascriptive in that being born into the race or ethnicities is the price of admission.

9. Sándor Kostya and Anne Fay Atzel, *Pan-Slavism* (Astor, FL: Danubian Press, 1981); Raphael Patai, *Essays in Zionist History and Thought*, Herzl Year Book (New York: Herzl Press, 1971). Edward Alexander and Paul Bogdanor, *The Jewish Divide Over Israel: Accusers and Defenders* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2006); Michael O. Friedman, *Origins of the British Israelites: The Lost Tribes* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993).

10. These examples are discussed in depth in Jeffrey Kaplan, *Terrorist Groups and the New Tribalism: Terrorism's Fifth Wave* (London: Routledge, 2010).

11. The terms *ascriptive* and *aspirational tribalism* were introduced by Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan, "Tribalisms and Mobilization: Irregular Warfare in the 21st Century," Program on Irregular Warfare and SOF Studies, National Defense University, Washington, DC, 2012. The term "malign" for ascriptive or aspirational tribalisms which threaten U.S. security, was introduced by Col. (ret) Chris Costa at that time.

12. Richard Schultz Jr. and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), x. We characterize irregular challenges and irregular warfare broadly here, and use Schultz and Dew's characterization that, in general, extremists will use "irregular warfare strategies and seek to employ all means, including catastrophic ones, to undermine the legitimacy and erode the will and influence of their state adversaries."

13. This argument does not include small, apocalyptic religious groups whose End Time visions are compatible with, but not identical to, the tribalism model. Aum Shinrikyo, the Family (aka the Children of God, the Family of Love, and currently the Family Foundation), the Manson Family, and a host of others have harbored dreams that are not dissimilar to the malign and benign tribal models. The research needed to explore these movements in sufficient depth to ascertain their relevance to our model remains to be done. In the meantime, see for example, Jeffrey Kaplan, ed., *Millennial Violence: Past, Present and Future* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 2002); Michael L. Karpin and Ina Friedman, *Murder in the Name of God: The Plot to Kill Yitzhak Rabin* (New York: Metropolitan Books, H. Holt and Co., 1998); Catherine Wessinger, *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, 1st ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

14. The "new tribalism" model is explicated at book length in Kaplan, *Terrorist Groups and the New Tribalism* (see note 10 above). See also Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Fifth Wave: The New Tribalism?," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 545–570; and Jeffrey Kaplan, "Terrorism's Fifth Wave: A Theory, a Conundrum and a Dilemma," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2, no. 2 (2008), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/>.

15. Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

16. Jason Ryan, "Underwear Bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab Pleads Guilty," *ABC News*, October 12, 2011.

17. Robert F. Worth, "Cleric in Yemen Admits Meeting Airliner Plot Suspect, Journalist Says," *The New York Times*, February 1, 2010; Cf. Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs, "Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab Sentenced to Life in Prison for Attempted Bombing of Flight 253 on Christmas Day 2009," *Justive.gov*, February 16, 2012, <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2012/February/12-ag-227.html>.

18. Mark Mazzetti, Eric Schmitt, and Robert F. Worth, "Two Year Manhunt Led to Killing of Awlaki," *New York Times*, September 30, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/middleeast/anwar-al-awlaki-is-killed-in-yemen.html?pagewanted=all>.

19. Philip Carl Salzman, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2008), 14–16. Salzman defines balanced opposition as a social system that, in part, explains collective security in tribal structures. In the context of the Teutoburg Forest, it's important because tribal cohesion was not yet linked to religion, but to blood and land. Much later, with the arrival of Islam, we will see religion as the dominant unifying factor in the Middle East.

20. Rose Mary Sheldon, *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 187.

21. Adrian Murdoch, *Rome's Greatest Defeat: Massacre in the Teutoburg Forest* (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2006), 99. Roman Legions XVII, XVIII, XIX.

22. Sheldon, *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome* (see note 20 above), 178.

23. Robert M. Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 152. Teutoburg Forest is often cited as an example of asymmetric warfare. Cassidy suggests that Rome's conventional "Western way of warfare" confronted German barbarians. Consequently, the Romans lost their relative advantage to an irregular force.

24. See, for example, Basil Aboul-Enein and Youssef Aboul-Enein, "A Theoretical Exploration of Lawrence of Arabia's Inner Meanings on Guerrilla Warfare," *Small Wars Journal*, July 5, 2011, 10. The authors assert that Lawrence's "contributions as a modern guerrilla leader and political strategist of the emerging nations indelibly assured his place, perhaps not alongside Clausewitz, Jomini or Mahan, but certainly in the annals of insurrectionary warfare."

25. Michael Korda, *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 29.

26. T. E. Lawrence and U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *The Evolution of a Revolt* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1990), <http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS68452>.

27. Thomas Friedman, "Remapping the Middle East, Maybe," *The New York Times*, January 9, 2005. Popular *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman references T. E. Lawrence bragging about re-mapping the Middle East, though for a more comprehensive and well-documented accounting of Middle East post-war political geography, readers should start with David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989).

28. Our contention here is that ascriptive tribalism, if understood through the lens of the model this paper suggests, is a global phenomenon and that a Western policy of tribal alliances and the use of tribal auxiliaries is not necessarily doomed to failure. Rather, given a system of rapid social and political intelligence which can feed into a flexible approach to tribes on a policy, diplomatic, and military approach that can rapidly adjust its relationships with given tribes could benefit U.S. geostrategic objectives. Given recent experiments with multiagency command structures such as was envisioned in the creation of AFRICOM, this goal is not as distant as has previously been the case. This is not just true of the Middle East where the U.S. faces a range of disadvantages such as their support of Israel, a history of support for authoritarian regimes, etc. Ascriptive tribes in Africa and Asia are in play as well, making our understanding of tribalism in both of its forms of global policy important.

29. Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 34. Gerges here speaks of the formation of an aspirational tribe comprised of jihadist elements of the many ascriptive tribes in Arabia and Yemen and the less tribalized actors in Egypt.

30. See David Ronfeldt, "Today's Wars Are Less About Ideas Than Extreme Tribalism," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 27, 2006. In fact, the author convincingly writes that al-Qaeda members and affiliates are "extreme tribalists who dream of making the West start over at a razed, tribal level." The Islamist perspective would agree with this statement, but would change "razed" to "raised."

31. Salzman, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (see note 19 above), 11. Again, we refer the reader to Dr. Salzman and the rich context he provides on balanced opposition, and how it relates to conflict in Arab cultures. Salzman further observes that "Arab culture addresses the universal problem of order and security in an ingenious and time-tested fashion." And, he also stresses, "balanced opposition is an ingenious way to organize security." So, the art of irregular warfare in the context of tribes requires careful, nuanced engagements that tap into the societal patterns of tribalism at its roots, in order to create a malleable alliance to go after a mutual enemy.

32. Robert F. Baumann, "Historical Perspectives on Future War," *Military Review* 77, no. 2 (March–April 1997), 8.

33. See, for example, Tareq al-Abd, "Tribalism and the Syrian Crisis—Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East," *Al Monitor*, August 31, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/culture/2013/01/tribalism-clans-syria.html>. For the term "affiliates," see The White House, *the National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, June 2011, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf). The strategy explicitly defines affiliates as groups

that have aligned with al-Qaeda. In addition, the use of the term “adherents” includes those “inspired to take action.” For the purposes of this study, “aspirational tribalism” is an important unifying theme that drives “adherents” to action.

34. Peter Hopkirk, *Like Hidden Fire: The Plot to Bring Down the British Empire* (New York: Kodansha, 1994), 106. We also learn that the British called Wassmuss the German “Lawrence.”

35. Christopher Sykes, *Wassmuss* (London: Longman’s Green, 1936), 43.

36. Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (see note 29 above), 92. The calls for fighting the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan resonated throughout the Muslim world. But Gerges makes the point that the call for jihad against the U.S. forces in Afghanistan did not have the same effect, meaning that calls for a “Holy War” possess varying degrees of popular legitimacy.

37. On Sudan, see Murray S. Fradin, *Jihad: The Mahdi Rebellion in the Sudan* (Lincoln, NE: Author’s Choice Press, 1965, 2003). On Saudi Arabia, see Anthony H. Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, *National Security in Saudi Arabia: Threats, Responses, and Challenges* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2005). An enjoyable journalistic approach to this history is Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia* (New York: Viking, 2009).

38. Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 86.

39. Steven Pressfield, “It’s the Tribes Stupid,” *Steven Pressfield Online Blog*, October 2006, <http://www.stevenpressfield.com/ep-1/>. Interestingly, Pressfield, a renowned fiction writer, soberly concludes that the so-called “clash of civilizations” is about tribalism, “not religion.” Pressfield is one of only a handful of writers who have explicitly made the tribalism-terrorism linkage, especially the point that tribalism was a key factor for Alexander. Yet the Western-Eastern clash was in a Pre-Islam–Pre-Christian world. Indeed, tribalism is a blind spot in the literature, and this contribution seeks to address this gap, and provide a new analytical model to consider tribalism as a key component for further consideration.

40. Ronfeldt, “Today’s Wars Are Less About Ideas Than Extreme Tribalism” (see note 30 above). The author convincingly makes the point that “tribalism sounds too anthropological for modern strategists, it has not taken hold.” This was not always so. In 1964, the U.S. Army’s Special Operations Research Office (SORO) recruited a group of American anthropologists for Project Camelot in which they gathered intelligence while undertaking their fieldwork. The positive response of many anthropologists was logical in the context of the Cold War in the 1950s and 1960s. The opposition of many academics to the Vietnam War provided the backdrop to the fate of these anthropologists when Project Camelot was made public. Careers were ruined, the field split into hostile camps, and tensions in the field lasted for a generation. The legacy of Project Camelot was the hostility with which formerly trusted anthropologists were met when they returned to their own fieldwork. Irving Louis Horowitz, *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967). In the post-9/11 atmosphere, anthropologists have once again been leveraged to support U.S. military ground forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. This suggests that the U.S. military and intelligence services may once again find social scientists willing to work with them. See also, for example, David Rohde’s article, “Army Enlists Anthropology in War Zones,” *The New York Times*, October 5, 2007.

41. Peter L. Bergen, *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict Between America and Al Qaeda* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 21. Bergen asserted that bin Laden himself “would even come to refer to Afghanistan as the Medina of the new age.” The reference is to the *Hijra*, the flight from Mecca to Medina that marks the year 1 on the Muslim calendar. The concept has had a major influence in the development of Islamist terror, especially in Egypt where the Islamic Society, a group that embraced *Hijra* as modern metaphor, was responsible for the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981.

42. Richard A. Gabriel, *Muhammad: Islam’s First Great General* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 189.

43. Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 176.

44. The *baya* relationship remains part of the modern Muslim world. See “Muslim Q&A,” June 28, 2012, <http://islamqa.info/en/ref/23320>.

45. Gerges, *The Far Enemy* (see note 43 above), 176.

46. Michael Scheuer, *Osama Bin Laden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 230–231, n. 70.

47. Ronfeldt, “Today’s Wars Are Less About Ideas Than Extreme Tribalism” (see note 30 above), 50.

48. Richard A. Oppen Jr., Mark Mazzetti, and Souad Mekhennet, “Attacker in Afghanistan Was a Double Agent,” *The New York Times*, January 5, 2010. See, for example, Joby Warrick, *The Triple Agent: The Al-Qaeda Mole Who Infiltrated the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2011).

49. [The former Secretary of Defense Donald] “Rumsfeld Explains His Vision for Military Reform,” *Washington Post*, February 1, 2010. It must not be forgotten that U.S. Special Forces and CIA officers merged their capabilities shortly after the 9–11 attacks, employing a classic unconventional warfare strategy, and the Taliban were routed in Afghanistan. As such, Rumsfeld cited the transformational nature of warfare in Afghanistan as a model for the future. In particular, Rumsfeld noted that the battle of Mazar represents an unremitting linkage between U.S. conventional strength and unconventional necessity as demonstrated by Special Forces riding horses alongside indigenous forces and communicating with aging B-52’s to direct new age, laser-guided munitions. Most dramatically, the employment of Special Operations Forces, Paramilitary CIA officers, and unconventional warfare was the right balance of tactical flexibility needed to route the Taliban and al Qaeda. See also, for example, Gary C. Schroen’s, *First In: An Insider’s Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005), and Gary Bernstein, *Jawbreaker: The Attack on bin Laden and al-Qaeda: A Personal Account by the CIA’s Key Field Commander* (New York: Crown, 2005).

50. Ann Scott Tyson, “Jim Gant, the Green Beret Who Could Win the War in Afghanistan,” *The Washington Post*, January 17, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/15/AR2010011502203.html>.

51. Major Tim Gant, “One Tribe at a Time,” <http://blog.stevenpressfield.com>.

52. James Dao, “Going Tribal in Afghanistan,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 2009, <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/04/going-tribal-in-afghanistan/>.

53. See, for example, Christopher P. Costa, “Phoenix Rises Again: HUMINT Lessons for Counterinsurgency Operations,” *Defense Intelligence Journal* 15, no. 1 (2006): 135–154. Costa makes the case that tribal engagement had to be a priority in Afghanistan, but more importantly, tribal interactions have to be centrally managed—synchronized—to avoid becoming a series of disconnected tribal interactions, which potentially work at cross-purposes with broader political and military objectives, or even offset tactical objectives, too. Disappointingly, few of these prescriptions were adopted on a scale broad enough to make a difference in Afghanistan.

54. Bergen, *The Longest War* (see note 41 above), 42.

55. See, for example, Daniel Byman, “Taliban vs. Predator,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 18, 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/64901/daniel-byman/taliban-vs-predator>.

56. David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting the Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34.

57. See, for example, Jonah Blank, “Invading Afghanistan, Then and Now,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 19, 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68214/jonah-blank/invading-afghanistan-then-and-now>.

58. This pattern of Wahhabi fighters wearing out their welcome in Afghanistan is longstanding, with Afghan tribes disgusted by the unreasoning violence of the Arab fighters turned against them. In the anti-Soviet jihad a generation earlier, Arab fighters were for this reason relegated to isolated outposts. Their numbers were always considerably smaller than was apprehended by Western intelligence due to the emergence of what Giles Kepel called “jihadist tourism,” where organized tours of young Arabs from Saudi Arabia would enter Afghanistan, pose for photos with AK-47s, and then return to their country of origin with tales of jihadist derring-do backed with photographic proof of their exploits. Giles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 148.

59. Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (see note 56 above), 38.

60. See, for example, Bing West, “Both Sides of the COIN,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 1 (January/February 2012), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136960/christopher-sims-fernando-lujan-and-bing-west/both-sides-of-the-coin>. Bing West defends his thesis that the U.S. military will “predictably” depart from broad counterinsurgency programs that embrace

large-scale nation building. Still, he agrees with some alternative views on one salient point: that Special Forces advisory teams are crucial to future security in Afghanistan.

61. See, for example, David H. Ucko, "Counterinsurgency After Afghanistan: A Concept in Crisis," *Prism*, December 2011, <http://www.ndu.edu/press/counterinsurgency-after-afghanistan.html>.

62. Bruce Hoffman, "A Counterterrorism Strategy for the Obama Administration," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no. 2 (2009): 366. Hoffman says "some 200 Maliks" have been murdered and substituted with more "compliant" leaders. This strategy of decapitation and replacement of traditional leadership is as old as insurgency itself. Stephen Lyon Endicott, *Red Earth: Revolution in a Sichuan Village* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988), 103; James W. Trullinger, *Village at War: An Account of Conflict in Vietnam* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980).

63. Jessica Stern, "The Protean Enemy," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July/August 2003), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58995/jessica-stern/the-protean-enemy>. Stern's thoughts on al-Qaeda's probable move toward "lone wolf" terrorism are somewhat dated, but completely consistent with our theme that this is the logical path for al-Qaeda adherents and their affiliates in the future. Moreover, Stern notes that Mir Aimal Kansi described his 1993 attack against CIA employees as something "between Jihad and tribal revenge."

64. John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 10.

65. Peter Bergen and Alec Reynolds, "Blowback Revisited," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (November/December, 2005): 2–6.

66. Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 12. However, as in Afghanistan, foreign jihadists eventually alienated Iraqi tribes, leading in part to the Sunni Awakening. Defense Department, U. S. M. C. U., *Al-Anbar Awakening, V. 1, American Perspectives: U.S. Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004–2009* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2009).

67. This is somewhat confusing to Western observers who note that the Ba'ath Party that took power in 1968 was secular. In the Iraqi view, however, the Ba'ath leadership and its local officials were identified with their tribes and religious confessions before they were with the party. Under Saddam Hussein, the regime locus was in his native Tikrit rather than in the Baghdad seat of government.

68. Montgomery McFate, "The 'Memory of War': Tribes and the Legitimate Use of Force in Iraq," in Jeffrey Norwitz, ed., *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2008), 296.

69. Salzman, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (see note 19 above), 16. We say "inherently tribal" because it fits our examination of balanced opposition. Salzman says, "Balanced opposition emphasizes particular loyalties: my lineage against the other lineage; my tribal section against the other tribal section; my tribe against the other tribe; Muslims against infidels." See also, for example, Montgomery McFate, "The 'Memory of War': Tribes and the Legitimate Use of Force in Iraq," in Norwitz, ed. (see note 68 above), 298. McFate, a cultural anthropologist by training, asserted, "the most common form of tribal collective action is the blood feud." Accordingly, the U.S. intervention in Iraq, as with al-Qaeda's excessive violence, triggered a predictable cycle of tribal violence and counter-violence consistent with long-standing anthropological explanations for this tribal phenomenon.

70. See, for example, Najim Abed Al-Jabouri and Sterling Jensen, "The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening," *Prism*, December 2010, [http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/images/prism2-1/Prism\\_3-18\\_Al-Jabouri\\_Jensen.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/images/prism2-1/Prism_3-18_Al-Jabouri_Jensen.pdf).

71. Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (see note 29 above), 137.

72. Victor David Hanson, *A War Like No Other* (New York: Random House, 2005), 213. Hanson calls the Athenians invasion of Sicily during the Peloponnesian War a "quagmire." Drawing largely from Thucydides' ancient account of the Peloponnesian War, students at the Naval War College studying lessons from ancient history during the height of the Iraq War often were led to consider Athenian overreach as a metaphor for the U.S. intervention in Iraq. See also, for example, R. B. Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 427–428.

73. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1976), 88. Clausewitz is frequently referenced on his conclusions

on understanding “the war on which they are embarking.” Clausewitz has been variously attacked and revered for his magisterial work. It goes well beyond the scope of this paper to delve too deep into the debates or make the mistake of shallow analysis that does not do justice to the work. Still, *On War* is a classic because it is timeless, and its principles transcend changes in warfare, but is still relevant as a common frame of reference for thinking about warfare, whether conventional or irregular.

74. Some of these adverse reactions can be planned for; others will invariably take planners lacking historical knowledge by surprise. A recent example is the U.S. intelligence community’s reported use of a polio vaccination worker in Pakistan in a covert capacity in the operation that killed bin Laden. Just as the backlash against anthropologists resulted from Project Camelot in the 1960s, Pashtun tribesmen are now refusing to allow their children to be vaccinated as the action of this individual gave a dimension of truth to Taliban-inspired rumors that the vaccine was poisoned or contained a targeting agent for U.S. Predator drones. As a result, the first cases of polio in a generation have struck Pashtun children. Ismail Khan, “Anti-Polio Campaign Worker Is Shot Dead in Pakistan,” *New York Times*, May 28, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/29/world/asia/anti-polio-campaign-worker-shot-dead-in-pakistan.html>.

75. See, for example, Sebastian L.v. Gorka, “The Age of Irregular Warfare So What?” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 58 (2010): 32–38, [http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/images/jfq-58/JFQ58\\_32-38\\_Gorka.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/images/jfq-58/JFQ58_32-38_Gorka.pdf). We believe that this article is an important and valuable contribution that coherently discusses Clausewitz in terms of today’s irregular warfare—in theory and practice—in order to adapt the “Trinity” to current circumstances, but not to dispense with the work that has been so valuable to military planners for generations. Gorka recognized the “egalitarian” nature of the “Irregular Warfare Age,” as we do, too, by stressing warfare, tribes, and their egalitarian nature as we have iterated throughout this paper in terms that anthropologists like Salzman and Kilcullen would recognize. So, we too use Clausewitz as a point of departure to make sense of irregular warfare in places like Yemen. Yet, we are more expansive in terms of setting a model that helps us better understand the future risks of aspirational tribalism.

76. Edward J. Villacres and Christopher Bassford, “Reclaiming The Clausewitzian Trinity,” *Parameters* 25 (Autumn 1995): 9–10. See also, for example, Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America 1815–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). For a uniquely valuable resource on all things Clausewitzian, see “The Clausewitz Homepage,” <http://www.clausewitz.com/>. Clausewitz was a prolific writer, but his text *On War* is the most central for English speaking readers. However, the text comes down to us in numerous translations, which, like the Bible, raises debate over which version is most true to the master’s intent. For a definitive discussion of the issue see, for example, <http://www.clausewitz.com/bibl/WhichTrans.htm>. For this study we selected Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (see note 73 above).

77. See, for example, Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982). Villacres and Bassford, in “Reclaiming The Clausewitzian Trinity,” attribute the government, people, army definition to the late Colonel Harry Summers in his book, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*. There can be no doubt, however, that Summers was influential to a generation of officers in the aftermath of Vietnam; a generation that may have sought some catharsis because of their recent war in Vietnam, so we will take a moment to comment here on Summers’ influential work. We have no fundamental argument with Summers’ definition: people, army, government, as a model in the context of war; we do, however, caution those who might draw the wrong lessons from our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consider Stephen L. Melton’s comment in, *The Clausewitz Delusion: How the American Army Screwed Up the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2009), 17. Melton commented critically on Summers’ interpretations of Clausewitz when he wrote: “If our cathartic reaction to defeat in Vietnam was the genesis on neo-Clausewitzian thought, our debacle in Iraq may be its swan song.” In other words, there are limits to Clausewitz. Summers fundamentally used Clausewitz and the Vietnam experience to untangle and make sense of what he viewed as a complete failure to apply conventional Clausewitzian thought and principles to strategy in Vietnam. We worry that there is a yet-to-be-written work that will cause the same intellectual mischief that Summers precipitated with his work *On Strategy*.

78. Attempts have been made to engage jihadist theology with a counter reading of the sources. These efforts have proven of little value, and indeed, counterproductive, as in the massive bilingual text, Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal, ed., *True Islam: and the Islamic Consensus on the Amman Message*, third edition (Amman, Jordan: no publisher listed, 2006). Again, this reflects a lack of historical memory as a generation ago Israel pursued a similar strategy with regard to Islamic texts in the Occupied Territories, thus confirming to a Muslim audience the negative portrayal of Jews from both religious texts and imported European anti-Semitism.

79. Mazzetti, Schmitt, and Worth, "Two Year Manhunt Led to Killing of Awlaki" (see note 18 above).

80. "Anwar al-Awlaki," *New York Times*, August 25, 2012, [http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/anwar\\_al\\_awlaki/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/anwar_al_awlaki/index.html). On the memorandum, see Charlie Savage, "Secret U.S. Memo Made Legal Case to Kill a Citizen," *New York Times*, October 8, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/09/world/middleeast/secret-us-memo-made-legal-case-to-kill-a-citizen.html?sq=anwar%20al%20awlaki&st=cse&scp=3&pagewanted=print>. Relatives of both Mr. al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, another American citizen, who was killed with al-Awlaki in the same Hellfire drone strike, have filed wrongful death law suits. These are unlikely to make much traction in the U.S. court system.

81. Bergen, *The Longest War* (see note 41 above), 246. Bergen notes that in 2009 there were "a record 43 Jihadist terrorism cases against US Citizens and residents." Bergen outlines other cases, too, that fit our definition of aspirational tribalism and lone wolf terrorism in a chapter titled "The United States of Jihad." Some of the cases Bergen examines will be addressed later in our paper, suffice it to say; those other examples are Somalis, Afghans, and even Jews who convert to militant Islam, although again our central theme suggests that many of those cases are a form of malign terrorism that can be studied and examined further using our "Trinitarian" framework.

82. David Johnston and Scott Shane, "US Knew of Suspect's Tie to Radical Cleric," *New York Times*, November 9, 2009. See also, for example, Scott Helfstein's *Edges of Radicalization: Ideas, Individuals and Networks in Violent Extremism* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2012), <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/edges-of-radicalization-ideas-individuals-and-networks-in-violent-extremism>. These contributions outline the direct links between al-Awlaki and Major Hasan, which fits our model of aspirational tribalism to a certain extent. Hasan was inspired and motivated to act by al-Awlaki, while he was operating from ungoverned space in a tribal sanctuary in Yemen. Hasan self-radicalized and acted out his political violence in the West.

83. See, for example, Anderson Cooper's AC 360 segment on Bryant Neal Vinas, "American Al Qaeda," *CNN*, <http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/category/american-al-qaeda/>. Strictly speaking, Bryant Neal Vinas was not a lone wolf, but his journey and those of fellow travelers in Pakistan may better fit the definition of Raffaello Pantucci's "lone wolf packs" by his self-radicalization, finding a U.S. mosque with like-minded adherents, and eventual travelling to tribal areas to wage jihad. Vinas' pattern operationalizes Pantucci's definition. For more, see Raffaello Pantucci, *A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Wolf Terrorists*, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, March 2011, <http://icsr.info/2011/04/a-typology-of-lone-wolves-preliminary-analysis-of-lone-islamist-terrorists/>. Most importantly, for our purposes, we learn that Vinas was inspired by al-Awlaki. This is a crucially important point.

84. The essay can be found on Louis Beam's "The Seditonist" website: <http://www.louisbeam.com/leaderless.htm>.

85. Franklin's birth name was James Clayton Vaughn, Jr. For a wonderful timeline of his career, see Sam Brauer, Ryan A. Bruch, and Ashleigh Benois, *James Clayton Vaughn Jr. AKA Joseph Paul Franklin*, <http://maamodt.asp.radford.edu/Psyc%20405/serial%20killers/Franklin,%20Joseph%20Paul.pdf>. The first monograph on Franklin's life is Mel Ayton, *Soul of the South: The Life and Crimes of Joseph Paul Franklin* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011).

86. Jeffrey Kaplan, *Encyclopedia of White Power: A Sourcebook on the Radical Racist Right* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altimira, 2000), 112–114.

87. Pierce's novel *Hunter* posited a character based closely on Franklin as a strategic suggestion to the radical right. His earlier novel, *The Turner Diaries*, about an apocalyptic race war in the U.S., had a seismic impact on the radical right of his day and was cited as the inspiration for Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Oklahoma Federal Building. Today, both books can be purchased from Amazon.com.

88. What today is called lone wolf terrorism and the use of the violent act as an art statement was first recognized as the work of what Stoddard Martin called the “artist manqué”—a personality type that describes an individual whose self-proclaimed genius is doomed to go unrecognized in his time but will serve as a model for others in the future. Most of the actors we have examined in this study fit this profile rather closely. Stoddard Martin, *Art, Messianism and Crime: A Study of Antinomianism in Modern Literature and Lives* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986).

89. Ramon Spaaij, *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism* (London: Springer, 2012), 98. The author provides evidence that the overall trajectory of lone wolf attacks is increasing exponentially, especially in Europe. This, too, he argues, may be related to largely successfully disruption efforts against group-actor terrorism, and the enabling role of the Internet. See also, for example, George Michael, *Lone Wolf Terror and the Rise of Leaderless Resistance* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012). This contribution provides an excellent and comprehensive review of lone wolf terrorism and the ideological elements of leaderless resistance. Cf. Jeffrey Kaplan, “Leaderless Resistance,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 80–95.

90. Brian Ross and Rhonda Schwartz, “Major Hasan’s E-Mail: ‘I Can’t Wait to Join You’ in Afterlife,” *ABC News*, November 19, 2009 <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/major-hasans-mail-wait-join-afterlife/story?id=9130339>.

91. See, for example, “Al-Qaeda on Alleged Fort Hood Killer: ‘Ideal Role Model,’” *USA Today*, March 7, 2010, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-03-07-al-qaeda-fort-hood\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-03-07-al-qaeda-fort-hood_N.htm).

92. Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Seeking Information*, <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2004/october>. Al-Amriki is one of only four Americans on the FBI’s most wanted terrorists list. The list is comprised of 29 people, all male, and with one exception (an animal rights activist), all Muslim. See Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Wanted by the FBI,” [http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/wanted\\_terrorists/@@wanted-group-listing](http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/wanted_terrorists/@@wanted-group-listing). The strategy of releasing information to the public by law enforcement agencies is based on the arrest of the Unabomber when his brother recognized his writing style and turned him in to the FBI.

93. To hear the praise for Maj. Hasan from both al-Amriki and al-Awlaki, see respectively “Imam Amar Al-Awlaki’s Message to American Muslims,” *Youtube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MjCDiSrfsc&feature=related>, and “Al-Qaida Calls on U.S. Muslims to Attack America,” *Youtube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBmhKutfJ48->.

94. See, for example, “Stressors at Fort Hood Were Likely Intense for Hasan,” *Time*, November 6, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1936085,00.html>. This article suggests conjecturally that Hasan was likely “wrestling with the conflicting demands of being a soldier, a psychiatrist and a Muslim.”

95. Joseph Rhee and Chris Cuomo, “Army Investigation Over False Accusations Ruined Our Lives, Say Muslim Soldiers,” *ABC Nightline*, May 13, 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/TheLaw/soldiers-allege-army-investigation-anti-muslim-harassment-ruined/story?id=13590030#.UE5P5FI19MI>; Kari Huus, “Outrage, Calls for Action Over Anti-Muslim Materials in Military Training,” *NBCNEWS.com*, May 11, 2012, [http://usnews.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2012/05/11/11659853-outrage-calls-for-action-over-anti-muslim-materials-in-military-training?lite](http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/05/11/11659853-outrage-calls-for-action-over-anti-muslim-materials-in-military-training?lite).

96. The authors jointly prepared questions for an extensive interview of Vinas in a Federal Correctional Institute in New York, June 27, 2012. This access is part of an ongoing collaboration with the Program for Irregular Warfare and SOF Studies, an initiative with the National Defense University (NDU). What follows on Vinas is used as unclassified background and was approved for publication by the office of the United States of America District Court, Eastern District of New York.

97. For our purposes, it is enough to say that the Salafiyya, whose theological interpretation is similar to the Saudi Arabian national religious ideology of Wahabbism which the Saudis have exported throughout the Islamic world, are a form of radical Islam dedicated to ridding Islam of innovations (*bida*) that have occurred in the faith since the time of the Prophet and the closing of the era of permissible interpretation of the faith in light of current events (*ijtihad*) in the 12th century CE. They believe that an ideal Islamic society will invariably emerge from the implementation of a stringent school of Islamic law (*Shar’ia*) on the Islamic community (*ummah*). For a view which contextualizes the movement strictly in terms of the

recent history of U.S. security studies, see Richard H. Shultz, “Global Insurgency Strategy and the Salafi Jihad Movement,” *INSS Occasional Paper 66*, April 2008, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA482684>; “Yūsuf al-‘Uyairī and the Making of a Revolutionary Salafi Praxis,” *Die Welt des Islams* 47, nos. 3–4 (2007): 422–459.

98. See, for example, Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation? AQAP, Tribes and Ungoverned Space in Yemen* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2011), <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-false-foundation-aqap-tribes-and-ungoverned-spaces-in-yemen>. Interestingly, this CTC report references both al-Suri and al-Awlaki in terms of their inspiring potential jihadists and the explicit message to those adherents in the West to commit violence autonomously with little to no direction. In short, al-Awlaki’s “leaderless Jihad” message did not resonate with Vinas; his personal jihad, when fully realized, was waged overseas with the understanding that he was part of the AQ organization. Moreover, recall our reference to al-Suri earlier in the article, where we cited his admonitions to potential jihadists on completely “digesting” the “principles” of jihad before taking such action. Vinas was wholly unfamiliar with al-Suri and perhaps, too, with the deeper meaning of jihad and the growing drift trending toward committing jihad independently, without direct support from a terrorist organization. He is typical of alienated young men of limited education or intellect who join movements of any violent ideology.

99. We note, too, the dangers that U.S. forces left on the ground may unknowingly be pulled into the host tribe’s leveraging of extra-tribal rivals rather than jihadist forces.