Islam and Terrorism: Lebanese Muslim Views on September 11

Simon Haddad; Hilal Khashan

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SIMON HADDAD

Political Science Department

Notre-Dame University, Lebanon

HILAL KHASHAN

Political Science Department

American University of Beirut

Lebanese Muslim reactions to the September 11 attacks are assessed using the hypotheses that receptiveness to dogmas of militant Islam and young age would predict approval of the attacks, and education and income, although important in explaining the domestic component of political Islam, would have no bearing on support for the September 11 terrorist attacks. In view of the recent surge of Sunni Muslim militancy, it is proposed that Sunni respondents would show greater support for the attacks than Shi'is. The data were obtained from a stratified random sample consisting of 337 Sunni and Shi'i male and female respondents to an opinion poll conducted in the Greater Beirut area during October and November 2001. The findings verify the proposition that proneness to militant Islam and age predicted approval of the attacks but do not verify the hypothesis that Sunni respondents exceeded Shi'is in approval for the attacks.

Even though Islamic militants, especially Usama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida organization, have repeatedly attacked U.S. targets during the past two decades, hardly anybody imagined that they would mount such horrific acts as those carried out on September 11, 2001. For years, Islamic militancy has presented itself as a security issue on both the domestic and global scenes, which generated an intense academic debate about its nature, scope, and strength in Arab-Islamic societies. The evolution of anti-Western (specifically anti-American and anti-Israeli) Islamic militancy has been paradoxical. Suicidal Shi'i militancy in the 1980s and 1990s served as an unlikely precursor to a far more destructive version of Sunni suicidal militancy, one that has been accelerating since the early 1990s. Sunnis, who prevail in the world of Islam, do not generally look up to Shi'is—often treating them as apostates—as role models. The politically dominant Sunnis for centuries persecuted and marginalized Shi'is on grounds of defection from the community; the latter's concept of martyrdom rang hollow in the former's religious interpretation. But that did not seem to withstand the test

of the 1980s and the ultimate achievement of Israel's unceremonious departure from southern Lebanon in May 2000.

Supported by Iran and tolerated by Syria, Shi'i Hizbullah introduced in 1983 the concept of martyrdom in waging war against the Western military presence in Lebanon. On September 23 of that year, in two simultaneous and well-coordinated attacks, Hizbullah suicide bombers destroyed the headquarters of the U.S. Marines and the French contingent attached to the multinational force operating in Beirut under a mandate from the United Nations (UN) Security Council following Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon. The bombings proved decisive in ensuring the pullout of all U.S. and French troops from Beirut shortly afterwards. Encouraged by its remarkable achievement in evicting two major Western powers from Beirut, Hizbullah immediately unleashed a wave of taking Western nationals living in Lebanon as hostages in a saga that ended in the killing of a few of them and the release of the rest after several years in captivity. In the meantime, Hizbullah introduced suicide bombings as a new variable in the equation of military confrontation between Arabs and Israelis. The new rules of combat in the Jewish state's low-intensity Lebanon war seemed utterly incomprehensible to the Western-minded Israeli political-military establishment. The dividends of religious militancy inspired the second *intifada*, led by Hamas and al-Jihad, in September 2000 in the West Bank and Gaza less than 4 months after Israeli troops pulled out from southern Lebanon. Curiously, the al-Qa'ida-linked October 12, 2000, attack on *USS Cole* in the port of Aden occurred only 2 weeks after the beginning of violence in the Palestinian Territories.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Appleby and Marty (2002, 16) stress that religious militants are not the monopoly of the Islamic faith. They state that they "are likely to spring up anywhere people perceive the need to fight a godless, secular culture—even if they have to depart from the orthodoxy of their traditions to do it." There is no dearth of social scientists, nevertheless, who claim that the Muslim community unquestioningly supports anyone who opposes the hegemony of the United States in world politics, even if they do not possess religious credentials, such as Libya's Mu'ammar Qhaddafi and Iraq's Saddam Hussein. Rashid (2001, 397), for example, lists bin Laden as "the last figure in this pantheon of heroic rogues." Using data obtained from a public opinion poll of 337 Lebanese Muslims surveyed shortly after the World Trade Center (WTC) and the Pentagon attacks, this study aims to empirically assess the incidence of approval for the terrorist act in the Muslim sector of Metropolitan Beirut. The study seeks to account for (1) the strength of radical Islamic orientation among the respondents, (2) the extent of support for the September 11 attacks, and (3) the determinants of that support.

We are interested in assessing the strength of political Islam, age, income, and education as determinants of support for the September 11 terrorist attacks. Furthermore, we propose that Sunni political Islam has replaced its Shi'i counterpart as the main proponent of anti-Westernism in Arab and Islamic societies. The brief Shi'i encounter with the West in the 1980s was inspired by a transient messianic perspective that then

galvanized Iran's Islamic revolution. Shi'i Islam appears more concerned about mere physical survival in the Sunni-dominated world of Islam than worrying about the pitfalls of an uneven confrontation with the West.

Our contention is that political Islam and age, regardless of gender, serve as important determinants of support for the terrorist attacks, whereas income and education do not. This line of reasoning deviates from the conventional wisdom of Western scholarship, which holds that poor social and economic conditions foster militancy and terrorism. In their explanation of Islamic militancy in Egypt, Esposito and Voll (1996, 186) argued that "youth, unemployment, and lack of housing have created conditions for recruitment by Islamists and have made for an explosive mix." Following the same logic, Anderson (1997, 20-22) attributed the ascendancy of Islamic militancy in the Middle East to the economic difficulties that Arab countries began to encounter in the past two decades as a result of the oil glut in the 1980s, the cessation of Moscow's economic assistance after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the accumulation of foreign debt. Nevertheless, Anderson sounded uncertain about education as a predictor of support for religious militancy. This uncertainty was most evident in her statement that "although the Islamist movements had widespread appeal in the lower strata of society, the active adherents tended to be university graduates" (p. 23). Huband (1998, 99) saw the resurgence of political Islam as a direct reaction to social and economic failures. He sounded confident that poor education standards and rising illiteracy have exacerbated the phenomenon of Islamic militancy. Conversely, Euben (1999, 26) attributed the appeal of Islamic fundamentalist violence to the frustration of the overeducated and underemployed class "who might have led the modernization process under more fruitful economic circumstances." Mark Tessler (1997, 107-11) dwelt on the social and economic discontentment of North Africans and other Arabs as a precondition for turning to Islamist political movements.

A few scholars have stressed the inadequacy of the social and economic variables to account for the rise of the Islamic movement since the late 1960s. Using survey findings dating back to the early 1980s about middle-class Palestinian college students living in Kuwait, Sivan (1985, 170) noted the salience of religion in the students' hierarchy of group affiliation. These urbanized and well-educated students exhibited a great deal of openness on issues related to family, child rearing, gender relations, and career orientation. He observed that "the realm of religion has been . . . the least amenable to transformation" (p. 176). Indeed, many Arabs see in revitalized Islam an alternative to defeated Arab nationalism and stifled leftist ideologies. This probably explains the ease with which many Lebanese Shi'i communists and Arab nationalists had shifted to Hizbullah in the 1980s.

The unfavorable social and economic conditions that frequently invite Western scholars to interpret Islamic radicalism in their light fail to account for the anti-Western agenda of political Islam. In our opinion, the destruction of the Islamic Caliphate some 80 years ago, the inception of European colonialism in Muslim and Arab lands, and Western endorsement of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine seem to better explain political Islam's grudge against the West than the simplistic socioeconomic argument. Lawrence (1989, 201) concurred with this assessment and suggested that the long-term consequences of colonialism on Arab and Muslim peo-

ples "have yet to be exhausted." Rejwan (2000, 137) detected a general Muslim response to the West that confirmed its perceived attempt "to dominate and subvert Muslim societies through economic and cultural power."

The present study's effort to shed light on the reaction of Lebanese Muslims to the September 11 attacks is significant for three reasons. First, it is necessary to put into perspective the inundation of criticism in the West against Islam as a belief system. For example, Yuksel (2001, 4) seeks to convince us that

> today's Islam has little to do with Muhammad's original message. It has become a religion concocted by scholars who traded the teaching of the Qur'an with fabricated narration and medieval Arab culture. They promoted vicious and oppressive laws, misogyny, hatred, terror and aggression.

Second, Lebanon houses Sunni and Shi'i Muslims in significant numbers, especially in Metropolitan Beirut, where the two sects have nearly equal demographic strength. Major militant Islamic groups, including Shi'i Hizbullah, enjoy strong support in West Beirut and its southern suburb, the Muslim part of Metropolitan Beirut. Third, Lebanon is the only Arab country where the authorities neither require permission to administer public opinion polls nor place hurdles in their way. Even though few public opinion polls surveyed Arab and Muslim reactions to the September 11 attacks, none seem to have dealt with sensitive questions. Thus, the Gallup Poll, which included nine Muslim countries, contented itself with reporting that two-thirds of those interviewed expressed unfavorable opinions of the United States and that the September 11 attacks had no moral justification (CNN.com-poll 2002). Similarly, a poll by Birzeit University (2001) limited itself to reporting that 64% of Palestinians it interviewed believed that attacks against U.S. civilians were anathema to *shari'a*. One of the advantages of conducting public opinions polls in Lebanon has to do with the fact that the Lebanese are probably the most politically informed and outspoken Arabs, thanks to the availability of independent media sources and unobstructed access to the Internet, all facilitated by the widespread use of English and French.

Before we proceed with the presentation of our findings, we deemed it necessary to bring to the attention of the reader the gist of Arab reactions to the terrorist attacks of September 11 as reported in the media. In addition, we will say a word about Islam and violence in relation to the concept of jihad, a corrupt national government, and general disaffection with the West.

ARAB REACTIONS TO THE REPERCUSSIONS OF SEPTEMBER 11

That Arabs and Muslims express anger against the United States is hardly news. Joyce (2001, iii) readily attributes it to Washington's "callous indifference to their suffering." Khashan (1991) found sweeping support among Lebanese Sunnis for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, with the vast majority of respondents condemning the U.S.

military buildup in Saudi Arabia in preparation for the reinstatement of Kuwait's sovereignty. Most of respondents believed that Saddam Hussein expressed the ethos of Arab nationalism more convincingly than former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, the celebrated champion of pan-Arabism during the cold war years (Khashan 1991, 110). Based on his findings, Khashan predicted that the last years of the 20th century would witness a shift in Islamic militancy from Shi'ism to Sunnism (p. 116).

By and large, Arab press commentaries and news coverage immediately recognized the severity and seriousness of the September 11 attacks. Analyses centered, however, on two disparate lines of thinking: the first called for dispassionate reflection and advocated effecting fundamental changes in Arab-Islamic thinking. It also urged Arabs to revisit core societal values and behavioral patterns. The second put all the blame on the United States and its arguably anti-Arab position on the Middle East's burning issues.

In a commentary on the strong possibility that U.S. investigators would eventually establish a connection between Muslim militant groups and the WTC-Pentagon attacks, the senior diplomatic correspondent for the Saudi-owned pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Hayat* urged her coreligionists to avoid providing justifications. She argued that it would be counterproductive for Arab interests to connect between the suicide airliner attacks and "ill-conceived U.S. policy on Middle Eastern issues" (Dirgham 2001, 1). A Lebanese columnist claimed that "traditions of violence, which permeate all levels of social interactions, continue to thrive in Arab and Islamic societies" (Hijazi 2001, 11). The secretary-general of the London-based Al-Khaw'i philanthropic foundation denounced the attacks as incompatible with Islamic morals and rebuked Arabs and Muslims who implored the United States to retaliate wisely and responsibly. He added that "it would be more appropriate for us to eradicate the malignant cancerous tumors from Arab and Islamic societies and take the initiative to crush the culprit [meaning bin Laden]" (Al-Khaw'i 2001, 6). A Saudi academician went as far as describing the outpouring of emotion in Arab and Muslim countries against the U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan as an indicator of "a serious flaw in the reasoning of Muslim masses" (Al-Rawwaf 2001, 9). A Libyan writer reasoned that the perpetrators of the attacks exemplify a twisted form of jihad, which is "the product of an obscurantist interpretation of Islam held hostage by deluded and hallucinating jurists" (Bul'isha 2001, 12).

Arab proponents of eliminating the core of religious militancy from their midst did not spare U.S. policy for fanning the flames of Islamic fundamentalism. Al-Khater (2001, 18) advised the United States to reevaluate its policies in the Middle East in a way that would serve its long-term interests in the region, including the establishment of a Palestinian state and putting treatment of Arabs on a par with the Israelis. An Egyptian writer echoed the mood of the Arab street by linking the attacks to "America's flagrant bias for Israel" (Huwaidi 2001, 11). This view is shared by many Arabs, including, for example, a member in the Lebanese parliament who saw the attacks as "the end product of a cumulative process of humiliating Arabs and preferential treatment for Israel" (Qansu 2001, 5). Warning against a grand conspiracy against Muslims, Huwaidi (2001, 11) seemed content that the attacks were the work of a Western fanatic religious group intent on using violence to expedite the second return of Christ

and bring peace to earth. A Saudi columnist noticed that the September attacks have revealed the intensity of Western hatred for Islam by referring to unsubstantiated accusations that it "embodies a terrorist philosophy" (Lari 2001, 10). Qusaybi, another Saudi Arabian columnist, was impelled by the events to take a stand. He called on fellow Arabs "to develop a strategy based on the premise that the West—the articulator of democracy, liberty and humanism—has committed gross injustice against the Palestinians when it coerced them to pay for its own mischievous deeds against the Jews" (Qusaybi 2001, 10).

ISLAM AND VIOLENCE

Violence is a quality inherent in mankind. It is an affliction that wreaks havoc both at the level of national politics and the global system. After all, birth and death are essentially two violent, life-shaping events. Islam has certainly had its fair share of violence. This is particularly true since this universalistic religion has assumed, since its inception in the 7th century, a worldly role that required the regulation of the behavior of both believers and infidels. Anderson (1997, 17) asserted that "the substantive dogma of Islam does not tell us when or why its adherents will actually resort to violence to further a quest understood to be Islamic." Evidence suggests otherwise. Islam came with a zeal for conquest and to spread the world of Allah to humanity in its entirety. After successfully taking control of the North African coast, Arab-Muslim army commander Uqba bin Nafi cried at the Strait of Gibraltar, "Oh God: if the sea had not prevented me, I would have coursed forever like Alexander the Great, upholding your faith and fighting all who disbelieved" (in Brett and Fentress 1998, 82). The Qur'an mandated that conquest, with the aim of proselytizing nonbelievers, was one of the major functions of the head of the Islamic state. Using the faithful as the instrument of war on the infidel, it proclaimed that

> soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined partners with Allah, for which He had sent no authority; their abode will be the Fire; and evil is the home of the wrong-doers. (Surat al-'Imran, verse 151)

It exhorted Muslims to fight and die in the name of Allah: "For life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception" (Surat al-'Imran, verse 185). The Qur'an promised heaven in exchange for death during jihad: "Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance from their Lord" (Surat al-'Imran, verse 169). In less than a century, Muslim armies established a spectacular empire that spread from Spain in the West to the gates of China in the East. Ottoman armies closing in on Christian Europe approached the walls of Vienna and helped engender in the West an enduring apprehension against Islam. Reciprocally, the initiation of the Crusades (1095-1271), Europe's colonization of Arab-Islamic lands in the 19th and 20th centuries, and the subsequent destruction of the Caliphate (1924) resulted in a corresponding and equally enduring Muslim apprehension against the overwhelming might of Christian Europe.

Dissension in Islam emerged shortly after the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632. Certain Muslims, the *kharijites* (seceders), felt that the caliph should epitomize the best qualities of the community of believers (i.e., deep faith, humility, justice, and fairness). In 644, they assassinated caliph Umar and ushered in a period of bloody violence against their opponents that served as a prototype for the current wave of Islamic fundamentalism that has been raging since the early 1970s (Mustafa 1995, 89). Shukri (1990, 8) ascribed Islamic militancy to the demise of a Western-inspired Arab renaissance and its pragmatism. A litany of resounding defeats that doomed the Arabs' drive for modernity for two centuries eventually prepared for the emergence of pristine Islamic movements calling for the reenactment of Islam's golden age. Shukri put much of the blame for the Arabs' failure to modernize on their seeming inability to reconcile the veneer of secularism they took from the West with the deep-seated elements of theocracy that prevail in Islamic societies. They essentially failed because they based their new thinking on a set of dualisms. Arabs could not reconcile the present with *turath* (heritage), Westernization with Islam, knowledge with faith, and modernity with tradition (Shukri 1990, 123).

Leaning on theocracy, Islamic fundamentalists sought directions from the Qur'an:

> Verily, this is My Way leading straight: follow it: follow not (other) paths: they will scatter you about from His Path: thus doth He command you, that ye may be righteous. (Surat al-An'am, verse 165)

Upon succeeding the prophet Muhammad as the leader of the Muslim community, Abu Bakr, the first orthodox caliph, addressed fellow Muslims: "Assist me if I abide by the word of Allah and correct me should I deviate" (in 'Abdul Wahid 1974, 9). In fact, the prophet regarded jihad as the highest form of piety, and he made it very clear to the believers: "It is your duty to rally behind every jihad-minded prince, whether he is a just ruler or not" (in 'Abdul Wahid 1974, 134). Inspired by the Qur'anic model, the Egyptian Muslim brethren movement, which set the pace and direction of reform and religious transformation in Arab-Islamic societies, pronounced jihad the duty of the entire community of believers and advocated the idea of political organization as an Islamic necessity to reverse their state of backwardness (see Al-Mawla 2000). Displaying an elitist conception of politics, the militant Islamic movement considered political struggle and the attainment of power "as the most pivotal function in its strategy as a whole. . . . Direct action becomes the substitute for detailed programs and compensates for lack of material power" (Choueiri 1996, 27). The militants saw the creation of the Qur'an-mandated Islamic state the only hope for redeeming Muslims. To secure their unquestioning involvement in highly risky operations that often resulted in self-destruction, militant groups demanded that the rank and file "surrender . . . their own rationality to the belief into a God ordained system" (Farah 1986, 43). The idea of jihad ranks prominently in the thinking of militant Islamic thinkers. Salih Sirriya, the founder of the Egyptian jihad movement, regarded jihad as the sixth pillar of Islam, calling it the forgotten obligation (see Voll 1991, 383).

Proneness to join the ranks of militant Islamic movements is often related to young age. Membership is usually associated with a clash between traditional values and

exposure to secular learning. In connection with this, Hoffman (1993, 210) asserted that "the values learned from the past and the realities of the present confront young people with bewildering contradictions and often a multitude of moral choices that create a sense of anxiety, loneliness, and disorientation." Hardacre (1993, 141) insisted that those contradictions and others (such as the adverse effects of urbanization, immiseration of rural areas, and national appeals) afflict women, not just men: "Women are thus powerfully attracted by fundamentalisms' interpersonal networks that invoke the language of kinship and in which the religion itself is portrayed as a family."

Dekmejian (1995, 3-4) noted the polycentric nature of the contemporary Islamic revival movement, despite its pervasiveness and persistence. This implies that, in essence, Islamic movements emerge in response to local conditions. Even though the proliferation of Islamic movements in certain countries may encourage the rise of counterparts elsewhere, it is unlikely that they will join in a common cause or see eye to eye on issues. Khashan (2002, 111) opined that the roots of the Islamic movement in Egypt and the Levant, which reveal the extent of their disaffection with the West, "go back to the last days of the eighteenth century, when Napoleon's armies landed in Egypt and showed Muslims, in a spectacular display of force, the extent of their cultural, scientific, and military backwardness vis-à-vis the West." The Wahhabi movement, which appeared in Najd in the 18th century, seemed more preoccupied with rectifying the doctrines of Islam than with the advent of Western might into the core of the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia's present Islamic resurgence, which resents the corrupt regime of the Saudi royals and their American sponsors, finds its recruits mostly among "recently urbanized Bedouins, whose status of relative deprivation among the more affluent urbanites made them eager converts to the activist cause" (Dekmejian 1994, 629).

METHOD

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Six well-trained field-workers collected a stratified random sample, which consisted of 337 Lebanese Muslims, during October and November 2001. We selected the respondents from three public-sector departments, three sectarian philanthropic organizations, and eight private businesses. All respondents came from Metropolitan Beirut, the hub of the Lebanese political system and the home base of its main political movements. The sample included 51% Sunnis and 49% Shi'is, of whom 37% were females (see the appendix for the items of the survey). To circumvent the problem of lack of opinion formation that obstructs field research in underdeveloped countries, the principal investigators decided against including illiterate or minimally educated elements of the population in the sample. For this reason, 50% of the respondents had college degrees, 36% had completed their high school education, and 14% had diplomas of vocational training. The distribution of the respondents by income showed that 15% of them reported high incomes, 55% average incomes, and 30% low incomes. As

TABLE 1
Factor Analysis Scores for Approval of
September 11 Attacks Using Varimax Rotation

Item	Loading
Support for the September 11 attacks	.79
Grievances against U.S. policy warrant attacks	.86
Support follow-up attacks, including use of weapons of mass destruction	.87
Emotional reaction to the images of September 11	.76

far as the distribution of the respondents on the basis of displaying radical Islamic views, the sample consisted of 15% highly radical, 23% moderately radical, and 62% nonradical respondents. Because the literature on the appeal of religious radicalism strongly suggests that most of its recruits and sympathizers come from among the young, we chose to overrepresent this age group. Therefore, the breakdown of respondents by age group took the following distribution: 62% for those in the 18 to 28 years category, 20% for the 29 to 39 years category, and 18% for respondents older than 39 years.

THE VARIABLES

The dependent variable pertained to approval of the September 11 attacks. Its operationalization into a scale ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.79$) consisted of four items whose text and factor scores, which ascertain their construct validity, appear in Table 1.

We used the following four independent variables to test their hypotheses: endorsement of political Islam,[1] education, income, and age. Education ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.50$), income ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.66$), and age ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 0.78$) were measured by one item each. The text and factor scores of the four items that measured endorsement of political Islam ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 0.77$) appear in Table 2. To ensure the unidimensionality of the dependent variable and its distinction from the political Islam scale, we factor analyzed the eight items pertaining to the two scales in one procedure. The four items representing support for the terrorist attacks loaded on the first factor, whereas the other four items indicating political Islam loaded on the second factor. The strength of the loadings precluded the possibility of item interactions.

We took pains to ensure the reliability of the instrument by ascertaining its adequacy through pretesting ($n = 25$) and the administration of the congruence with reality and consistency of responses reliability tests. Cross-tabulation of representative items

1. Endorsement of political Islam differs from religiosity, and we deliberately avoided using the latter for two main reasons. First, traditional Muslims confine their piety to engagement in Islam's five basic pillars, which do not allude to political action. Second, radical Muslims believe in the need to re-create the Islamic state on the basis of *shari'a*, even if it requires using force to overthrow the government. In addition, they hold a deep grudge against the West for dismantling the Islamic state and, arguably, for encroaching on the lives of Muslims. The sample included 78% of respondents who described the intensity of their religiosity as high or moderate. On the other hand, only 49% of the respondents said they either highly or moderately endorsed political Islamic inclinations.

TABLE 2
Factor Analysis Scores for the Political Islam Items Using Varimax Rotation

Item	*Loading*
Support certain religious groups' use of violence to achieve their objectives	.79
Religious leaders should assume public office	.84
An Islamic state is the best political system in which one can live	.88
Warmth of feeling toward Afghanistan's Islamic regime	.78

invariably produced very high correlations, thus attesting to the reliability of responses.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Frequency distributions expectedly showed that a clear majority of respondents (70%) expressed disaffection with U.S. policy in the Middle East. For 90% of respondents, the most important source of disaffection related to U.S. support for Israel. For more than 30%, the second most important source of disaffection concerned the U.S. role in the Gulf War and the sanctions against Iraq that have been in place since its invasion of Kuwait in 1990. On the issue of eradicating global terror emanating from the Middle East, most respondents believed that the task could be accomplished by a more balanced U.S. policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the termination of the sanctions against Iraq.

Does disaffection with U.S. foreign policy suffice to support the September 11 attacks? Apparently not. Table 3 demonstrates that there is a gap between the two because only 30% of the respondents said they supported the attacks. A sweeping majority felt, nevertheless, that Arab grievances against the U.S. did indeed warrant those attacks. More than one-third of the respondents indicated they would support follow-up attacks by Islamic militants, including the use of weapons of mass destruction. Another one-third reported deriving emotional gratification from the images generated by the destruction of New York's twin towers.

The dispersion of the reactions to the September 11 attacks between supporters and dissenters necessitated further analysis, namely, possible linkage to militant Islamic tendencies. Answers to the four items on wedding extremist political tendencies to Islam revealed diverse responses, as shown in Table 4. Significantly fewer respondents manifested support for militant violence or the defunct Taliban regime in Afghanistan than for the right of religious leaders to assume public office or for perceiving the Islamic state as the best political model. Obviously, the responses registered a sizable endorsement of militant political tendencies. The summary scale revealed that nearly half of the respondents either strongly or moderately approved of the September 11 attacks.

The strength of the approval rate for the attacks raised a question about whether it was associated with membership in religiously militant organizations. Even though

TABLE 3
Approval of September 11 Attacks (N = 337) (in percentages)

	Yes	No	Unsure	Total	Summary Scale	%
Support for attacks	30	58	12	100	High	38
Grievances warrant attacks	88	07	05	100	Medium	11
Support follow-up attacks, including use of weapons of mass destruction	37	55	09	101[a]	Low	51
Emotional gratification to images of attacks	34	65	—	99[a]	Total	100

a. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 4
Salient Components of Endorsing Political Islam (N = 337) (in percentages)

	High	Medium	Low	Total	Summary Scale	%
Support for militant violence	13	13	75	101[a]	High	15
Support for religious leaders' assumption of public office	16	30	53	99[a]	Medium	34
Perception of Islamic state as the best political model	20	25	55	100	Low	51
Views on Afghanistan's Taliban	12	25	64	101[a]	Total	100

a. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

affiliation with political parties showed a greater incidence of approval of the attacks than the sample average, membership in militant Islamic, especially Sunni, groups produced overwhelming approval rates (see Table 5). These results conform with the findings of Khashan's (1991) study of Lebanese Muslim support for Iraq's position during the 1990-1991 crisis in the Gulf, which pointed to much more pronounced support for the invasion of Kuwait and the Iraqi president's rhetoric among Sunni respondents than their Shi'i counterparts. Eventually, the events of September 11 demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt that the most formidable source of anti-Western religious militancy came from Sunnism, not Shi'ism. Khashan (1989, 585) attributed lukewarm Shi'i hostility for the West because "Shi'i fundamentalism—in sharp contrast with its Sunni counterpart—is engrossed in intra-Islamic debates over thorny reli-

TABLE 5
Party Affiliation and Approval of September 11 Attacks (*n* = 62) (in percentages)

Organization	High	Medium	Low	Total
Hizbullah (*n* = 33)	55	36	9	100
Amal movement (*n* = 8)	50	25	25	100
Secular groupings (*n* = 10)	30	20	50	100
Sunni groupings (*n* = 11)	91	09	—	100

NOTE: Cramer's V = 0.36. Level of significance = 0.02.

gious issues, particularly who should preside over the Muslim community." The data, however, show that Sunni respondents' mobilization into politics remains quite modest compared with the Shi'is.[2] Unlike the regression analysis that follows, mere statistical associations have no inferential utility.

The regression equation for determining the correlates of approval of the September 11 attacks included the following four independent variables: endorsement of political Islam, age, income, and education. Analysis sought to take note of possible differences between males and females, Sunnis and Shi'is. We expected the correlates of approval of the attacks to be stronger among Sunnis than Shi'is, males than females, and younger than older respondents. Regression analysis for the entire sample, which appears in Table 6, reveals that the paramount strength of political Islam, followed by age, predicted approval for the September 11 attacks. As expected, income and education failed to provide significant scores. Many scholars, such as Hoffman (1993, 208), refuse to link militant Islam to poverty and low levels of education. Young age persists as a significant correlate of extremism, but it no longer possesses a quasi-monopoly in predicting it, as it did in the 1970s (Hiro 1988, 274). Since then, the Arab public has grown dismayed by the general political failure of their ruling elites and the increase in foreign power intervention into their local affairs, namely by the United States.

The summary regression analysis for determining approval for the attacks by gender (see Table 6) showed political Islam as a stronger predictor and age as a weaker one for males than for females. Comparatively, this implied that the tenets of political Islam had a relatively smaller impact on females, whereas age appeared slightly more significant. Even though young men carried out the suicide attacks on September 11, it is plausible to argue that their appeal extends to older age groups. It is common knowledge that many of bin Laden's al-Qa'ida rank and file fought as *mujahidin* in the 1980s against the Soviet army in Afghanistan, and several of his top leadership were veterans of the Egyptian jihad movement. In Lebanon, Hizbullah's frequent rallies to condemn U.S. policy in the Middle East and express support for the intifada usually attract audiences from all age groups.

2. For years, it has been the policy of Syria, the major power broker in Lebanon, to fight off Sunni political groups. It eventually succeeded in virtually eliminating them. Syria's Alawite ruling elite seemed concerned that if they allowed Lebanese Sunnis to group politically, they might eventually link up with the Sunnis in Syria, who form the country's major religious group.

TABLE 6
Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing
the Determinants of Approval of September 11 Attacks

	Entire Sample	R^2	Males	R^2	Females	R^2	Sunnis	R^2	Shi'is	R^2
Political Islam	.44		.51		.30		.34		.49	
	(8.95)**	.21	(8.25)**	.28	(3.44)**	.11	(4.40)**	.13	(7.09)**	.26
Age	.19		.14		.29		.16		.20	
	(3.81)**	.04	(2.25)*	.02	(3.31)**	.08	(2.03)*	.02	(2.91)*	.04
Income	.06		.06		.03		.06		.11	
	(1.12)	—	(0.91)	—	(0.33)	—	(−0.75)	—	(1.59)	—
Education	.01		—	.02			−.07		.06	
	(0.25)	—	(−0.02)		(0.26)	—	(−0.97)	—	(0.78)	—
Combined R^2		.25		.30		.19		.15		.30
Constant	6.40**		4.77**		4.16**		9.18**		3.97**	

NOTE: *t* scores are in parentheses.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .02$.

Regression results for female respondents yielded almost identical results for political Islam and age as predictors of approval for the attacks (see Table 6). What makes younger females more inclined than males to support the terrorist attacks? It is likely that rapid urbanization, which altered Lebanon's demographic distribution in recent years, has accelerated women's political awareness. Many life roles, such as breadwinning, which had hitherto been performed by men, suddenly became women's domain soon after relocating to Beirut. Heavy Israeli retaliatory raids against Hizbullah caused immense suffering for civilians; these developments brought Lebanese women into direct contact with the country's political realities and charged them with resentment toward the United States for unconditionally supporting the Jewish state. Unlike their mostly uneducated mothers, young women, especially those who migrated to Beirut, have been able to receive an education and form opinions, sometimes militant, about political events.

Regression analysis evinced the saliency of political Islam and the moderate significance of age in predicting Sunni approval of the attacks. As important as they were, both variables lagged, notwithstanding, behind their predictive strength for Shi'i respondents (see Table 6). Regression verified the hypothesis that Sunni respondents' adherence to the imperatives of political Islam generated stronger approval for the September 11 attacks than Shi'is. Likewise, age seemed somewhat stronger in predicting Shi'i than Sunni approval for the attacks.

When Lebanese Sunni clerics harshly criticized the U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan, the Sunni prime minister summoned the Grand Mufti and admonished him for not silencing them (Nassar 2001, 3). Unlike the predominantly rural and impoverished Shi'is, the Sunni community is largely urban, well educated, and affluent. The data showed that, even when they turned to political Islam, they were less likely to perceive the September 11 attacks in cathartic terms.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The extent of support for the September 11 terrorist attacks among the respondents is disturbing. The most striking result of this study was not the confirmation of the impact of militant religious dogma on predicting the endorsement of the September 11 attacks but the finding that Sunni respondents expressed it considerably less intensely than Shi'is. The findings suggest that Hizbullah continues to play a key role in foment-ing anti-American sentiments. This brings to the picture the need for restoring Leba-non's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which would make it more difficult for radi-cal groups to disseminate belligerent ideas.

Sunnis included in this sample do not represent Sunnism at large; therefore, the magnitude of their support for the September 11 attacks does not account for the rapid increase in the Sunni version of political Islam in countries such as Egypt, Saudi Ara-bia, Algeria, and Pakistan. Still, this finding suggests that the rapid increase in Sunni militancy is neither universal nor uniform and that a more equitable global environ-ment has the capability to arrest it and reverse its surge.

Western fear of radical Islam is not new. Writing immediately after the end of World War I, Bury (1919) noticed the absence of militant tendencies in medieval Islam. He saw Islam as a totally peaceful religion as long as Muslims did not feel threatened by foreign intruders. Bury reserved strong words for Western Europeans drumming up Islam's dreadful inclinations:

> Most people have heard of the pan-Islamic movement, especially during the war. Some of us have called it a political bogey and some a world-menace, but these are extremist views—it is really the practical protest of Moslems against the exploitation of their spiri-tual and material resources by outsiders. . . . Hitherto pan-Islam had been an instinctive and entirely natural riposte to the menace or actual aggression of non-Moslems. (Pp. 11-12)

More than eight decades after Bury's (1919) declaration, most Arabs and Muslims continue to see militant Islam as a consequence of Western incursions against them, as well as a result of the abuses of local political elites whom they installed in power against public will.

The mass media and other agents of socialization in Arab and Muslim lands never cease telling their publics that the Western-led United States is largely responsible for their debacle. They have inculcated among many Arabs and Muslims deep resentment for the West and apparently convinced a good cross section that terrorist attacks, even against civilians, amounted to jihad. Arabs and Muslims need to take positive action to reform their media and make them amenable to inquisitive reporting and critical analy-sis. Since its birth as a symptom of frustration, militant Islam has been aggressive.[3] The movement that started as a local phenomenon in the early 1970s soon became a national trend. Before too long, it acquired a global dimension. The approval levels for the September 11 attacks by a significant component of the Lebanese sample are as

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3. Bandura (1973) stated in his frustration-aggression hypothesis that frustration triggers a state of incitement to act aggressively.

alarming as the attacks themselves. Human behavior usually results from observation and imitation. The sporadic suicidal attacks launched by Hizbullah against Israeli troops in southern Lebanon in previous years became a daily occurrence in the Palestinian Territories after launching the second intifada in September 2000.

The cycle of religiously inspired violence has punctuated the lives of Middle Easterners for more than three decades. It eventually spilled into Western Europe before hitting the United States with unimaginable ferocity. Bringing peace, stability, and order to the Middle East is long due. If the problems of the region are not acted on immediately, they may soon slip past the point of resolution. Since September 11, many Arabs have been imploring the United States to help resolve the region's problems and display magnanimity toward them. Al-Jisr (2001, 7) regarded a positive gesture from the United States as essential to sway Arabs from further supporting the cause of militant Islam. Speaking in a more serious vein, Sahhab (2001, 10) implored the United States to listen to the "voice of reason and cease to treat Arabs as nonentities." The resolution of the Palestinian question and the lifting of sanctions on a post–Saddam Hussein Iraq would go a long way toward improving the Arab public's image of the United States and stemming the tide of political Islam's global dimension.

APPENDIX
Key Survey Items Used in the Study on
Attitudes toward the September 11 Attacks

1. Education ($1 = high$ to $3 = low^a$)
2. Occupation ($1 = high$ to $3 = low^a$)
3. Income ($1 = high$ to $3 = low^a$)
4. How do you describe the intensity of your religiosity? ($1 = high$ to $3 = low^a$)
5. Tell us your opinion on the following statement: "I support certain religious groups' use of violence to achieve their objectives." ($1 = strongly support$ to $4 = strongly oppose$)
6. Should religious leaders acquire public office? ($1 = strongly support$ to $4 = strongly oppose$)
7. Tell us your opinion on the following statement: "An Islamic state is the best political system to live in." ($1 = strongly agree$ to $4 = strongly disagree$)
8. How do you feel about the Islamic regime in Afghanistan?[b] ($1 = strongly approve$ to $4 = strongly disapprove$)
9. What is the name of the political party/grouping with which you identify? ($1 = $ Hizbullah, $2 = $ Amal Movement, $3 = $ secular groups, $4 = $ Sunni groups)
10. How do you feel about the attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center and damaged the Pentagon? ($1 = strongly support$ to $4 = strongly oppose$)
11. Describe the intensity of your grievances against the United States. ($1 = major grievances$ to $4 = no grievances$)
12. Do you feel that your grievances against the United States warrant support for the September 11 attacks? ($1 = definitely$ to $4 = definitely not$)
13. Do you personally sanction further attacks in the future against U.S. targets? ($1 = definitely$ to $4 = definitely not$)
14. How do you describe your emotional reaction to the images generated by the attacks on September 11 (hijacked planes crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon)? ($1 = vindication$, $2 = approval$, $3 = nonchalance$, $4 = somberness$)

15. Assume that U.S. policy in the Middle East does not change and that militant Islamic groups acquire weapons of mass destruction. Should such a situation arise, would you approve of using these weapons against the United States? (1 = *strongly approve* to 4 = *strongly disapprove*)

a. High to low choices were determined by the interviewers according to agreed-on criteria.
b. The administration of the questionnaire took place before the overthrow of the Taliban movement.

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