

**INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM:
THE UNKNOWN FACTOR
IN THE DETERMINATION OF THE WORLD'S ECONOMIES**

The current international phenomena, loosely called terrorism, is the single, most-important facet, for which no economist in the world, today, can accurately factor into the growth equation, allowing him to make a determination about the immediate, or intermediate, future of any economy of the world.

Nobody owns that model of the 21st Century's crystal ball – at least, not yet.

Prior to the attacks by United Nations (UN) military forces, spearheaded by the military might of the United States (US), on the training camps in Afghanistan of key elements of Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda organisation, it had been estimated that more than 30,000 recruits were in training to be the '*sleepers*' of this terrorist organisation, to be installed in countries, around the globe.

In Afghanistan, one knew where the al Qaeda killers, under training, could be found, but, today, they have scattered – and they could be anywhere.

Aside from being relatively well organised and well trained, they, also, appear to have ample funds, enabling them to carry out their deadly deeds with comparative ease.

To the very ignorant and the very gullible, especially for many of the inhabitants of territories, such as the West Bank and the backwaters of Indonesia and the Philippines, '*these fighters of Islam*', as they, oft-times, like to call themselves, might well take on the appearance of folk heroes, who are willing to lay down their lives for their beliefs.

Certainly, the Bali, Indonesia, attack, which took the lives of some 200 innocent tourists and Balinese residents of the resort area on October 12, 2002, had all the earmarks of having been executed by native, Indonesian-born, al Qaeda disciples, who were under the mistaken impression that the killing of innocent tourists, many of whom were Australian nationals, with few of them, being Jewish, or ever having had ties with America, was the Holy task, assigned to them by Allah.

Confirmation of the Bali bombing culprits, being Indonesian nationals, with a penchant for Muslim fundamentalism, only exacerbated the problems, facing international intelligence agencies.

Because it was, then, reconfirmed that the original al Qaeda cadets, those who had been trained in camps, such as the ones that had been destroyed, or dismantled, in Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan, to name just 3 areas, which have been confirmed to have had training facilities for Osama bin Laden's neophytes, had been actively recruiting locals in many parts of the world to do the bidding of this international terrorist organisation.

Searches of the homes of some of the Indonesian organisers and/or perpetrators of the Bali attack of October 2002 turned up documents, extolling the virtues of Osama bin Laden and the work of his followers.

In one house, which was searched by the Indonesian Authorities, there had been erected, what appeared to be, a type of altar, with a photograph of Osama bin Laden, clearly displayed: Al Qaeda's leader was being deified by

one or more of the occupants of this house.

When, during the week of November 15-21, 2003, al Qaeda struck twice, with devastating effect, at targets in Istanbul, the Capital City of Turkey, the world was shocked at the precision of the attacks and of their obvious successes.

It is only too apparent, today, that the al Qaeda cadets had graduated to become very efficient and effective killers.

Today, every country in the world is vulnerable to the attacks of these predominantly Muslim fundamentalists; and, it is unlikely that they can be stopped, easily, because they do not value their own lives, which they would, gladly, sacrifice for their beliefs.

They kill, indiscriminately, and with a great deal of zeal.

Hatred is the driving force, it is very apparent.

In many cases, the immediate families of the suicide bombers, especially in the case of the Palestinian suicide bombers, encourage their children to become instruments of terror – and to die for the cause, of the eradication of the Jews, from Israel and everywhere else, and/or to cripple the US economy.

Today, the target of al Qaeda operatives may be the Jews of Turkey; tomorrow, it could well be the Muslim clerics of Pakistan, who are advocating peace and non-violence.

When, on September 11, 2001, al Qaeda operatives flew 2, hijacked commercial aeroplanes into the World Trade Centre in Manhattan, New York, and another one into The Pentagon in Washington, D.C., one of the many resultant effects of the attacks was that they were solely responsible for virtually bankrupting many international airlines in many parts of the world.

People were afraid to fly on commercial airlines for fear that there would be a repeat performance of the September 11 incident.

The US Government shut down all airspace in the US, following the September attacks, until safety could be fully restored to the country.

For many of these commercial airlines, financial recovery is, still, a long way off.

One cannot, completely, discard the threat of international terrorism when trying to analyse the direction of an economy of a country/territory because international terrorism is a factor, which must be an integral part of the equation – sadly.

If, for instance, a commercial aircraft, hijacked by a group of al Qaeda operatives, were to be flown into a key building in downtown Tokyo, Japan, the business district of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Champs Élysées in Paris, France, etc, it would create economic havoc, immediately.

It would take years for recovery to take place, and, in those intervening years, the economies of those countries, which had been attacked, would be, at least in part, in disarray.

If incidences of **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** can retard the growth of an economy of a territory by a couple of years, attacks, such as those that were carried out against targets in Istanbul on November 15 and November 20, could retard an economy's growth by 5 years or more.

Success Will Lead To Failure

But the continuing successes of al Qaeda may well be its undoing, in the fullness of time.

Today, it is highly likely that there is no central command for many international al Qaeda operatives, who are having to make their own decisions in respect of targets to be attacked, and, clearly, they are doing so, without reference to Osama bin Laden, his lieutenants, or any of the founders of this terrorist organisation.

Extermination of the leaders of these splinter cells, therefore, will be akin to the axiom of cutting off the head of a snake, leaving only the body and tail to wiggle until the reptile expires, its movements cease, and only the phantom of the snake remains.

Whenever an al Qaeda splinter cell determines to become active in a territory, it has to show its hand at some point in the planning of an attack, and, once that happens, the cascading effect could well result in the authorities of that territory, locating, one by one, the planners of the proposed activity, and, eventually, the perpetrators of deeds of terrorism, or conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism.

As with any prize fighter, counter-measures are just as important to survival in the ring as are any sustained attacks.

Once a boxer sees or senses a right cross, being thrown by his opponent, he knows, due to his hours of training in the gymnasium, that a left hook to the head is an effective counter-measure since the execution of the right cross exposes the opponent's right flank to attack, for which, unless the opponent is extremely fast, he will have little protection.

So it is with al Qaeda: The launching of every attack will, eventually, lead to the exposure of the organisation's weaknesses, for which there is unlikely to be an adequate defence.

Also, as the al Qaeda attacks continue, and continue to have varying degrees of success, it could well cause there to be the common enemy syndrome to come to the fore.

Already Great Britain and the US are bosom buddies, both of which countries are determined to fight what they see to be the evils of al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and the remnants of the Regime of Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

The UN has accepted, completely, as has the rest of the free world, that al Qaeda's activities must be terminated with extreme prejudice.

The more successful becomes al Qaeda, the quicker will countries band together to fight the common foe, thus the concerted effort of the most-experienced intelligence agencies in the world will weaken the organisational structure of al Qaeda, day by day.

If the idiom rings true, that money talks and bullshit walks, then huge sums of cash will be paid by countries to those who will pass on information about al Qaeda operatives, thus causing suspicion and dissension to be created within al Qaeda's own ranks.

Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda may have hundreds of millions of US dollars at their disposal, but the enemies of al Qaeda have hundreds of billions of US dollars at their disposal, ready to be spent on the destruction of this menace to the Western World; and, all the peoples who value freedom.

But, in the meantime, as the al Qaeda '*fungus*' spreads, it is going to cause chaos to many economies of the world, and, for that, there would appear to be no way to make a definitive determination as to the extent of the disruption that will follow in its wake.

The key to understanding the extent of damage, done to an economy by al Qaeda et al, of course, will be the amount of investor confidence that will be swept away with every horrifying attack.

And, for that, one must play the game by ear.

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