

judges and lawyers is not an overnight project. In the meantime, the Karzai government could find ways to better integrate customary judicial practices to connect influential religious leaders to the center.

The Bush administration, for its part, also has a chance to atone for past mistakes in Afghanistan. The latest budget request, buttressed by the recent appointment of an American four-star general, suggests the country's fate is now considered a long-term strategic priority. One major flaw persists, though: security spending trumps reconstruction aid by about \$4 to \$1, a sign that counterinsurgency strategists remain overly focused on killing Taliban when they should be trying to win over the grassroots support that fuels the enemy. And instead of Plan Colombia-style counternarcotics measures that hit the desperate hardest, more should be spent on targeting drug trafficking networks that operate in lawless areas, where drug labs and smuggling routes carve the terrain.

Graft lurks as a spoiler. Unless Washington's power of the purse is used to leverage President Karzai to reform institutions, ugly trends will continue. Rather than targeting the poor, key violators that poison his government's integrity right under his nose need to be purged as if they were on the payroll of the Taliban itself. This would have the effect of spreading good faith among disillusioned, scared Afghans, along with skeptical Western donors whose generosity can ill-afford to run dry. The antidotes to insurgency are basic quality of life improvements, anchored by rule of law. It is high time both were ensured by an Afghan government deserving of the people's trust. ■

*Jason Motlagh is a deputy foreign editor at United Press International in Washington, D.C. He has covered conflicts in Asia and Africa.*

# Ant Farm

Inflating a disorganized menace into a global predator elevates al-Qaeda and imperils us.

**By James L. Payne**

OVER FIVE YEARS HAVE PASSED since the 9/11 attacks, and we still cannot agree on how to handle the problem of terrorism. In order to have a strategy, you have to decide what kind of enemy you face, and thus far we don't have a clear idea of the opponent.

To focus this issue, it is useful to draw on an analogy from the animal kingdom. Admittedly, using analogies is a rough way to elucidate reality, but considering where sober and official theories of terrorism have led us, perhaps we can profit from an unorthodox perspective.

Traditionally, foreign enemies have resembled lions: large beasts with a definite home base, capable of destroying us and capable of being destroyed by us. Hitler was lion-like. So was Stalin. So was Mao. These enemies had huge, multi-million-man armies that could invade and occupy other countries. They were centralized actors with one brain, so to speak. They could focus their military power on making political demands, such as a change in our leadership. Conflicts with them were life or death struggles.

These enemies were lion-like in another way: they were prudent actors, concerned with the survival of their regimes. Thus they adjusted their aggression according to the probability of a strong reaction. Because these lion-like enemies were watching us for signs of strength or weakness, we learned that appeasement is dangerous, and security lies in strength.

Does this traditional perspective on foreign policy serve us in the battle against terrorism? A close look shows that terrorism—that is, the terrorism of Islamic radicals—is an un-lion-like enemy in almost every respect. To begin with, terrorism does not have a home country. Terrorists can be recruited anywhere in the world from the pool of a billion Muslims. Although you can kill or capture individual terrorists, there is no way to win a war against terrorism.

Just as we cannot destroy terrorism, terrorism cannot destroy us. Islamic radicals specialize in shocking people and—with the aid of the media—they do this very well. But they do not have the capacity to invade and govern any Western country. Osama bin Laden has no army that could march into Cleveland and impose Sharia.

The Islamic radicals are not a single, unified organization capable of making demands and keeping bargains. They include scores of groups with no common platform of political objectives. Nor are they prudent planners like the lion-like enemies of the past. They are emotional and easily give in to hatred. They can be provoked by trivial, symbolic incidents—cartoons in a distant newspaper, a few enigmatic lines in a pope's speech. Their ready use of suicide reflects their mentality. Radical leaders do not view suicide attacks as the tragic destruction of one of their own true-believing comrades, to be undertaken only after grave and careful

deliberation. Violence is seen as an intoxicating tactic, attractive even if it brings a trivial result.

The radicals overlook that their acts of gratuitous violence alienate moderate Muslims and increase the resistance of their enemies. And they seem unconcerned with consolidating their victories. In Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden had a chance to build the kind of Muslim fundamentalist state he is supposed to cherish, yet he threw it away by provoking the U.S. with the 9/11 attacks.

The radicals' proclivity for dispute and violence leads them to divide into factions ready to fight and kill each other for almost no discernable reason, as we see in the recent battles between Hamas and Fatah in Palestine. The idea that these temperamental rabble-rousers could carry out a sustained program of world domination is beyond plausibility.

In no important respect, then, does Islamic terrorism resemble a lion. We need to look about the forest for another kind of animal in order to make sense of this disjointed, irascible enemy. In my opinion, it's ants.

Ants specialize in shocking people; indeed, they seem to be programmed to attack even when it does them no good at all. You can't deter ants, you can't reason with them, you can't bargain with them. And no matter how many individual ants you kill, you can never defeat them because the forest has an infinite supply.

Though you can't win a war against ants, neither can they defeat you. They can sting and cause injury, but their bites are not fatal, at least not directly. Indirectly, ants can cause death if the victim reacts irrationally—for example, if the stinging goads him to jump off a cliff.

Does the analogy still hold if the ants can employ nuclear weapons? That certainly would make the ant bites more painful, but it doesn't change the charac-

ter of the threat. A nuclear explosion may—or may not—do greater damage than a conventional attack, but it would not translate into a military victory for the terrorists. They could not occupy territory or transform U.S. institutions any more than they could after 9/11.

It might help steady our thinking if we realized that terrorism is not a functional military campaign designed to take objectives and impose outcomes. It is more akin to a natural disaster like an earthquake or an influenza epidemic. Natural disasters are painful, but they do not change values or leadership. In Indonesia, the December 2004 tsunami left a toll of 236,000 dead and missing. After that disaster, Indonesia went on with the same rulers and the same institutions.

Employing nuclear weapons, the radicals might cause a similar disaster in the United States, but it would not

The ant analogy also points us in a useful direction for limiting the incidence of terrorism. The principle here is that stomping on or near an anthill is the surest way to stir up trouble.

As just noted, Islamic radicals have a shallow, emotional perspective. They are not sophisticated about political philosophy or foreign affairs, but they respond in defense of their territory when it is threatened. When they see the United States attempting to direct the destiny of Muslim countries, it excites them. Never mind that this U.S. intervention is well intentioned; never mind that most of it is futile. Just the act of trying to throw our weight around in that area stimulates radicals to a frenzy of opposition.

Hence, the most important move the United States can make to diminish Islamic terrorism is to step back from its involvement in the Middle East. Those

**THE ANT ANALOGY FOR TERRORISM SUGGESTS THAT THE FIRST PRINCIPLE FOR DEALING WITH THIS DIFFUSE, EMOTIONAL ENEMY IS NOT TO OVERREACT, NOT TO DO MORE HARM TO YOURSELF THAN THE ANTS CAN DO TO YOU. PATIENCE IS THE WATCHWORD IN GRAPPLING WITH TERRORISM.**

change our culture, traditions, or ideals. We would pick ourselves up, rebuild, and carry on as before. The more lasting injury stemming from such a tragedy would be self-inflicted if we gave into a hysterical overreaction. We might, for example, be impelled to invade and occupy half a dozen countries in an attempt to exact revenge.

The ant analogy for terrorism suggests that the first principle for dealing with this diffuse, emotional enemy is not to overreact, not to do more harm to yourself than the ants can do to you. Patience is the watchword in grappling with terrorism.

who think that all foreign enemies are lions will call this a policy of appeasement and say that the best way forward is to show resolve by increasing our political and military involvement in the region. So you see, it makes a difference which kind of animal you think terrorism is. ■

---

*James L. Payne has taught political science at Yale, Wesleyan, and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. His latest book is A History of Force: Exploring the Worldwide Movement Against Habits of Coercion, Bloodshed, and Mayhem.*

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*]

### The Pluck of the Irish Rebels

By Steve Sailer

Neoconservatives who extol Winston Churchill's adamancy never mention that in 1921, after Britain suffered no more than 700 army and police deaths in Ireland, he played a key role in negotiations with insurgents that resulted in Britain suddenly cutting and running from southern Ireland after 700 years of occupation.

Why did the UK, which sent 20,000 Tommies to their deaths on the first day of the Battle of the Somme a half decade earlier, not stay the course in Ireland? Ken Loach's film about Irish Republican Army gunmen in 1920-22, "*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*," which won the top prize at the 2006 Cannes festival, graphically conveys why the English, a civilized people, went home. Defeating a guerrilla uprising broadly supported by the local populace requires a level of frightfulness that does not bear close inspection.

Loach, the 70-year-old English movie director, is an old-fashioned lefty of the didactic Marxist sort. His films include "A Contemporary Case for Common Ownership" and "Which Side Are You On?" Not surprisingly, these haven't made him a big name in America, but "*Barley*" is worth a watch. Loach is neither the most fluid of filmmakers nor the

most historically trustworthy, but "*Barley*" is consistently informative about the Anglo-Irish War, if spectacularly wrongheaded about the subsequent Irish Civil War among the victors.

In recounting the history of a rebellion, with its endless alternations of terrorism and reprisal, you have to start the story at some particular incident, which inevitably biases your allocation of blame. Loach's sympathies are heavily with the IRA, the more radical the better, so he begins in 1920 when the Black and Tans (tough demobbed British WWI vets sent to Ireland to augment the police but given little appropriate training) rough up some fine Irish lads enjoying a game of hurling, killing a boy for the crime of speaking only Gaelic.

If he wanted to be more evenhanded, Loach could have commenced the previous year when the IRA began attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary, necessitating the dispatching of the Black and Tans.

Or then again, he could have begun with any date going back to 1167, when the first English soldiers arrived. Compared to England, the Emerald Isle was smaller and rockier, so less populated. It was also more chaotic—no national king ever emerged—leaving it at its neighbor's highly limited mercy until its sons could win their freedom.

"*Barley*" tells of two fictional County Cork brothers, Damien, a doctor (played by Cillian Murphy), and Teddy, a natural leader of fighting men (portrayed by Padraic Delaney), who withstands having his fingernails ripped out without spilling the IRA's secrets. (Unfortunately, the Cork accents are so impenetrable for the first half hour that I didn't realize until the end of the movie that they are brothers.)

The brothers roughly represent, transformed to merely a local scale, those initial partners and eventual enemies in Irish revolution, Éamon de Valera, the math professor turned future president, and Michael Collins, the postman turned general.

Murphy, the dark-haired young actor from Cork with the alarming cheekbones and oddly pale blue eyes, is best known as the villain in "*Batman Begins*." His looks make him easy to pick out in a crowd of Irishmen, which is useful since Loach doesn't adequately distinguish between the supporting characters. When an IRA man tremulously announces after a firefight with the Black and Tans that "Gogan's dead!" it's not as moving as Loach intends because we had never gotten straight in our heads that Gogan was alive in the first place.

Murphy's skull-like head and intense eyes (he'd make an ideal Lenin) become more suited to the role of Dr. Damien as the healer turned killer, a Hibernian Che Guevara, grows ever more fanatically radical. He denounces his brother for supporting the compromise peace that Collins brokered with Churchill and David Lloyd George and demands that the Irish guerrillas, with their 3,500 rifles, fight the entire British Empire to the death in the name of socialism. (Loach's better dead than not red mindset perversely mischaracterizes the stance of the anti-treaty fighters led by the deeply Catholic de Valera.)

In Loach's worldview, a resemblance to Lenin is to be cherished, but less bloodthirsty viewers will increasingly sympathize with Damien's brother Teddy, the man of violence who chooses peace for his people but at a terrible price to his family. ■

Not rated, but would be R for language and torture.