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## Scandinavia next terror target?

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A popular Swedish proverb observes that "it is not the fault of one that two quarrel." This truism is increasingly reflected in the apparent deterioration of the security situation in Scandinavia, a region traditionally successful in adopting neutral positions during military conflicts, thereby guaranteeing relative peace.

Tragically, immunity protection for uninvolved third parties under international law seems no longer relevant in the post-September 11, 2001, era. Indeed, in the eyes of contemporary Jihadist terrorists, who advocate a Muslim holy war against infidels, there are no innocent communities and countries. Moreover, political and judicial distinctions between combatants and noncombatants are now obliterated by projecting brutal state and nonstate illegal force.

It is only a matter of time, therefore, before Denmark, Norway and Sweden are seriously targeted by both international and homegrown terrorist networks. Admittedly, prior to September 11, this region had only faced low-level ideological and political violence. Foreign terrorists and their indigenous sympathizers and supporters have exploited the benefits of the Scandinavian open liberal democracies with their modern infrastructure offerings. These enlightened and sophisticated systems enabled substate perpetrators in the name of "higher principles" to engage in propaganda activities, secure safe-havens, raise funds, purchase weapons, provide logistical support and mount rather primitive operations against selected adversaries within the region.

Between the 1960s and 1990s, several dozen terrorist incidents were recorded. These attacks included targeting primarily foreign embassies and diplomats, airline offices, businesses, as well as domestic religious institutions. The motivations of the terrorists involved were mostly political, related to conflicts involving Yugoslavia, India, South Africa, Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, Israel and the Soviet Union (later Russia).

Since September 11, Scandinavia's potential victimization has become more critical than ever before. Two major reasons account for this inevitable eventuality. The apparent expansion of al Qaeda's international network into the region is the first reason. After all, the stated objective of Osama bin Laden's terrorist worldwide movement is to unite all Muslims from Asia, Africa and Europe in a Shariah form of government that follows the rule of the Caliphs. To achieve this theological-strategic goal, the United States and its Western allies are by definition considered the "enemies of God" and must, therefore, be attacked by as much force as possible, including the utilization of weapons of mass destruction in a Jihad (Holy War) until total victory is achieved.

This Jihadist mindset seeing Scandinavia as the next battlefield in Europe is unmistakably clear. Currently, Denmark provides some 500 troops to the stabilization efforts in Iraq and has also contributed to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, supporting the U.S.-led coalition. In 2005, a Danish publication containing caricatures of the prophet Muhammad set off severe protests against the country, especially in the Middle East, culminating with the attack against the Danish Embassy in Damascus.

Sweden also contributed military assistance in Afghanistan, and its new conservative government openly advocates that Sweden should join its two Scandinavian neighbors in NATO, thus playing a greater role in the U.S. global war on terrorism. Moreover, Norway is now active in Afghanistan after withdrawing its troops from Iraq in October 2005.

Members of al Qaeda network affiliates, such as Ansar al-Islam, Ansar al-Sunna, Al-Aqsa, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Moroccan Islamic Combatants Group, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and Chechnyan operatives, have already developed loose structures in the region. These and like-minded bodies elsewhere pose potential security threats.

The second major contributing factor that encompasses escalated violence in Scandinavia is homegrown terrorism. This is a new phenomenon consisting of small, unsophisticated and autonomous groups nourished by bin Laden's Jihadist concepts, seeking to form and operate without traditional external direct or indirect support. The newly emerging do-

mestic cells include second-generation young Muslim immigrants from various countries (such as Bosnia, Lebanon, Morocco, Iran, Syria and Turkey) who after becoming disillusioned by their "normal life" are attracted by the multi-faceted forms of inspirational communications through Jihadi chatrooms and Islamic Web sites (e.g., "Supporters of Shariah in Sweden"), anti-Western and anti-Semitic propaganda (e.g., Radio Islam), radical preaching in certain local mosques (e.g., Taiba in Denmark), and the distribution of militant videos and literature.

Some of the domestic terrorist operatives have already been apprehended in Scandinavia and abroad. They have been accused of, and in a few cases even been convicted for, plotting attacks on such targets as churches, synagogues and U.S. and Israeli embassies.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Scandinavian countries have strengthened their legal frameworks, improved human and technological intelligence, and upgraded law-enforcement capabilities. These efforts have already yielded practical results, including increased surveillance and bugging of suspects, banning incitement and glorification of terrorism, deporting noncitizens aligned with terrorists, and strengthening the cooperation with the European Community and other national and regional bodies to combat terrorism.

Despite these proven accomplishments, several areas require more national and regional governmental attention and action:

- \* Expanding greater public awareness of the nature of the challenge.
- \* Establishing lead national centers to deal with terrorism.
- \* Broadening mandates of police and military forces to act cooperatively both domestically and internationally.
- \* Instituting emergency medical preparedness to cope with unconventional attacks.
- \* Developing a regional oversight body to oversee and maintain a balance between security considerations and ensuring the protection of human rights and a common democratic value system.
- \* Constructing interfaith dialogues with mosques and other immigrant communities to foster tolerance and improved cultural relations.

In sum, it is naive to assume these recommended counterterrorism measures would guarantee once again Scandinavian "neutrality" in the face of post-September 11, terrorism. But it behooves all nations to recall the warning by the Roman observer Syrus Publilius some 2,000 years ago, "He that is best secure from dangers also is on his guard even when he seems safe."

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