



Target UK. Britain is the frontline for violent jihadism in Western Europe

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At first glance, the bomb conspiracy in London and Glasgow might be seen as a protest against the British knighthood awarded to the novelist Salman Rushdie. The Rushdie honor elicited violent threats from Pakistan, the place of origin of many British Muslims and perhaps the least stable of the major Muslim countries aside from Iraq. Suspects in this latest incident have been described as "South Asian," meaning they could come from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, or Bangladesh.

But there are of course other possible motivations and considerations--in addition to the underlying desire of al Qaeda types to kill British civilians whenever and wherever possible. The attack on Glasgow airport seems odd, but incoming prime mi-

nister Gordon Brown is from Glasgow. The terrorists might have intended action in Scotland as a direct warning to Brown, as well as an aggravation of political uncertainty during the transition. The aim would be similar to that in the Madrid metro atrocity of 2004: put a definitive end to Tony Blair's foreign policy by getting British troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

But Iraq reminds one of another issue: the use of car bombs. It has been obvious for months that al Qaeda and its supporters intend to export the terrorism in Mesopotamia to other regions of the world. In the aftermath of the London-Glasgow events, a Scottish police official described the five individuals under arrest as recent arrivals in

the country. Sir John Stevens, Prime Minister Brown's new hire for counterterrorism, warned bluntly that al Qaeda had "imported the tactics of Baghdad . . . onto the streets of the UK."

Most important, it is now undeniable that Britain is the frontline for violent jihadism in Western Europe. It has a Muslim population approaching 2 million, who are overwhelmingly Sunni and South Asian, and are ideologically dominated by two extreme sects: Deobandis (which produced the Taliban) and Saudi-financed Wahhabis (inspirers of Osama bin Laden.). And although Muslims make up only three percent of the population of the UK, many northern English cities are now up to 15 percent.

With so many British Muslims crowded in enclaves, terrorists are provided with a protective environment that does not exist in the United States. They also have easier access to, and from, a radicalizing Pakistan. Tony Blair tried to deal with the situation through programs like the "Radical Middle Way," a government-subsidized roadshow by fundamentalist Muslim clerics intended to dissuade young people from joining violent movements. (A similarly misguided policy favoring "engagement with moderate Islamists" is being bruited around Washington right now, but with little success.)

The radical Islamist counter-offensive, at least partly fueled by the belief that America (and Britain) can also be chased out of Iraq, is visible everywhere. But Britain will continue to be the main European target: it is the only Western country where terror has been repeated, with the anniversary of the double London metro bombings of 2005 only a week away--to say nothing of the Heathrow conspiracy last year.

The only solution, in the UK and globally, is serious action to curb incitement and plotting by Islamist radicals, whether in mosques or on the streets. Paradoxically, Britain has an Islamist element in its political establishment, represented by the Muslim Council of Britain and various public figures. Yet the hold of the radicals on the mosques themselves is more tenuous than in the United States, and more British Muslims are willing to step forward to directly confront the extremists. But to unite British political will with moderate Muslim repudiation of terror means an end to meaningless rhetoric about dialogue with the radicals, including those in the bosom of the system. British timidity about identifying radical Islam as an enemy of civilization should finally cease; Gordon Brown has every chance to make a bolder response to the threat a key part of his agenda as prime minister.