TERRORISM: ITS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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> *'Anarchy is a crime against the whole human race; and all mankind should band against the anarchist. His crime should be made an offence against the law of nations, like piracy and that form of man-stealing known as the slave trade; for it is of far blacker infamy than either.'*
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> Theodore Roosevelt, State of the Union Address, 3 December 1901 (following the assassination of President William McKinley by an anarchist terrorist)

1. Introduction

The events of 11 September 2001 have made it painfully clear even to an uninformed observer that we have entered a period of history where states and even superpowers can be challenged in unorthodox ways. Such challenges may come from within states and be backed by a variety of parties.

Today, in 2007, we find ourselves in a world where there is an ongoing 'war on terror'. Is this the first time that states must face the challenge of terrorism? Who are these 'terrorists' and what is this 'terror' that is being fought, and what are our chances of success?

These questions form the basis of this present study. It is designed as a review of the history, effectiveness, incidence, and the foreseeable future of terrorism. The emphasis is put on highlighting trends and regularities pertaining to terrorism with the aim of developing a general understanding of this phenomenon. Such a trend- and regularity-based approach is also expected to facilitate the appreciation of terrorism's future. The study limits itself to discussing the use of terror primarily by non-state perpetrators.

The study begins by discussing the meaning of 'terrorism' and reviewing some of the definitions used. It is then followed by a historical characterisation and overview of the incidence of terrorism in the present day. The next section discusses the effectiveness of terrorism and the variables influencing it, while special attention is paid to incidents of use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists. Overviews of the general features of terrorist organi-

sations and of the nature of 'war on terror' take the discussion further. The study ends with an assessment of the possible future of terrorism (al-Qaeda, in particular) and the variables that influence it.

2. Defining terrorism

The task of defining terrorism is complicated, but absolutely necessary in order to develop a sufficient understanding of this phenomenon and to deal with it effectively. The complexity of defining terrorism has many aspects. It arises from the variety of parties who have used violence to instil terror. There have also been many different justifications given for the use of this violence (that we may intuitively define as 'terrorism'), and there have been many different interested parties defining terrorism, each having their own views and in many cases vested interests in a particular way of defining 'terrorism'. Therefore, it is not that surprising that there are well over 100 various definitions of 'terrorism' in existence.[1] In order to define 'terrorism' for the purposes of this study, it is useful to begin with a brief historical insight.

The use of violence with the aim of creating fear in a wider audience in order to prevent various parties from doing something, or, on the contrary, to coerce them into a certain behaviour, is as old as mankind. Such use of violence has served states and various regimes over a long period of time.

The term 'terrorism' originates from Latin word 'terrere' that means 'to frighten'. It obtained its modern form 'terrorism' during the Reign of Terror in France from 1793–1794. In Maximilien Robespierre's words:

> '…terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs'.[2]

The Roman Empire used violence ranging from crucifixion of individuals to full-scale genocide to force individuals and nations into submission. The French Revolution sent more than 20,000 people to the guillotine over a period of a few months. Modern examples of drastic state terrorism include Nazi Germany, Stalinist Soviet Union, communist China of the Mao period,

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[1] **Jeffrey Record.** Bounding the Global War on Terrorism. Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2003, p. 6.
[2] **Center for Defense Information**. A Brief History of Terrorism. 2003. <http://www.cdi.org/friendlyversion/printversion.cfm?documentID=1502>, (accessed on 10 August 2007).

Pol Pot's Cambodia, and several other dictatorships and totalitarian re-gimes.[3]

Various non-state perpetrators have also used violence to coerce their enemies through fear, throughout history. Jewish Zealots assassinated ene-mies in their struggle against the Roman Empire, Assassins killed crusaders in the Holy Land, in 1605 Guy Fawkes nearly destroyed the British Parlia-ment, and anarchists have assassinated various high-ranking officials and heads of states. In an act of terrorism with probably the most disastrous con-sequences in human history, Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip shot dead Archduke Franz Ferdinand triggering the chain of events that led to the First World War, and the tremendous suffering of millions of people. The events of 11 September 2001 showed that organisations motivated by religion are equally as willing to use violence in pursuit of their goals.

These presented examples provide only a glimpse of the very wide spectrum of actors and goals that have been associated with the use of violence in a way that has been named 'terrorism'. Clearly, one could readily argue that anarchists in Russia sought not only to coerce the czarist regime of Russia through fear, but also tried to launch a larger uprising. Such argu-ment is absolutely correct and only underlines the difficulty of defining ter-rorism in a comprehensive manner.

Therefore, it is not that surprising that as of 2007 the United Nations Or-ganisation (UN) still does not have an official definition of terrorism. It is very difficult to find a common denominator to all such events and make a generalisation that does not become meaningless. The main obstacles to forging consensus on the definition of terrorism have concerned acts of ter-ror committed by states, and the distinction between the activities of terror-ists and those of freedom fighters.[4] The 'academic consensus definition' of terrorism is a case in point:

> Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen ran-domly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or sym-bolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message genera-tors. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of

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[3]   **Thomas R. Mockaitis**. The "New" Terrorism: Myths and Reality. Westport, London: Praeger Security International, 2007, pp. 19–21. Record 2003, p. 7.

[4]   **Mockaitis** 2007, p. 2.

terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought. [5]

The United States (US) government has experienced similar problems in defining terrorism. The US Department of Defence has defined terrorism as:

> 'The calculated use of unlawful violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.'

The problem with the Department of Defence definition is that it covers all sorts of terrorist activities, it does not discern it clearly enough from other forms of violence. Simultaneously, nine other US government departments have come forward with nine other definitions. [6]

The European Union sees as terrorism acts those that aim at:

- seriously intimidating a population;
- unduly compelling a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act;
- seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation. [7]

These objectives can be achieved through various illegal activities. They range from attacks on a person's life to cutting vital services to society, and respective threats; they include hijackings, kidnappings and other forms of criminal activity. According to the EU definition, terrorism is not a particular ideology or movement, but rather a method or tactic for achieving various goals. [8]

As a method or tactic, 'terrorism' bears no ideological or political charge and this mitigates somewhat the puzzle associated with calling Islamic fighters resisting Soviet occupation of Afghanistan 'freedom fighters' and at the same men fighting alongside al-Qaeda against the Western powers – 'terrorists'. In this way, 'terrorism' becomes a process of using various methods of

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[5] **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**. Definitions of Terrorism. 2007. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/terrorism_definitions.html>, (accessed on 15 August 2007).

[6] **Mockaitis** 2007, p. 2.

[7] **Council Framework Decision** of 13 June 2002 on Combating Terrorism. – Official Journal of the European Communities, 22.6.2002, L164/3–7.

[8] **EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2007.** Hague: Europol, 2007, p. 9.

instilling fear in a target audience with the aim of achieving stipulated goals, while 'terrorists' and 'terrorist organisations' become people and organisations whose dominant method of pursuing their policy objectives is coercion through fear. Defining 'terrorism' as a tactic suggests that freedom fighters might also resort to terrorism and the terms 'terrorist' and 'freedom fighter' are not inherently mutually exclusive, or, at least, there is no very clear line between them. The difficulty of determining the extent of use of terror by either terrorists (for whom it ought to be the dominant method of action) or by freedom fighters (for whom it usually is not the dominant method) underlines the lack of such a clear line between 'terrorists' and 'freedom fighters'.

All in all, one could argue that defining 'terrorism' as a tactic of instilling fear by various players leaves the reader with as many problems as any other definition. It could actually be true from the law enforcement perspective or even from the viewpoint of the political scientist. Such definition is, however, sufficient from the perspective of evaluating the applicability of terrorism to promoting one's goals and drawing attention to one's grievances. In other words, it is sufficient for reviewing the history and evaluating the prospects of terrorism.

3. The history and occurrence of terrorism in the present day

States as well as non-state bodies have used fear as their weapon of choice for a very long time, and as a historical process the use of fear may have its own dynamic and regularities. Thus, one can ask whether such regularities or cycles have been observed. Have changes in social order, beliefs or some major events brought along specific increases and decreases in the occurrence of non-state terrorism?

David Rapoport has outlined four major waves of international terrorism in his seminal work on the history of international terrorism. The first ('anarchist') wave of modern terrorism began in Russia in the 1880s and lasted until the 1920s, the second ('anticolonial') wave began in the 1920s and ended in the 1960s, the third ('new left') wave began in the 1960s and continued through to the 1980s, and the fourth ('religious') wave emerged in 1979 and continues until today.[9]

The 'anarchist' wave of terrorism grew out of the deep dissatisfaction of anarchists with the slow reforms of societies and a realisation that the at-

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[9] **David C. Rapoport**. Four Waves of Modern Terrorism. – Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy. Audrey Kurth Cronin, James M. Ludes (eds.). Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004, p. 47.

tempts of revolutionaries to ignite uprisings (and thereby launch changes of the social order) through various writings were inefficient. Anarchists viewed societies as being chained by various conventions and sought acts of terror to destroy these conventions. Their goal was to force those defending governments to respond to terror in ways that would undermine the rules which governments claimed to respect. In order to achieve the disproportional response of governments, terrorists targeted various high ranking officials and even heads of state. In this way, excessive force used by authorities would polarise societies and uprising would follow. The weapon of choice of these first terrorists became dynamite and it usually killed the attacking terrorist in the process.

The high point of the first wave of terrorism arrived in 1890s and it continued even beyond the first wave – until 1940. This period could be called the 'Golden Age of Assassinations' and during that period one major European minister or head of state was assassinated every 18 months.[10] The first period of international terrorism also witnessed the first attempt by states to tackle terrorism globally after the assassination of the US President William McKinley in 1901. It failed as states were unable to forge consensus for joint action.[11]

The 'anticolonial' wave of terrorism began with signing the Treaty of Versailles ending the First World War. The principle of self-determination used to break-up defeated empires provided a foundation for aspirations of a new kind of terrorist organisations, for example, The Irish Republican Army and various Jewish organisations that operated against British forces in the Palestine. The terror campaigns of the second wave were fought mainly in territories where special political problems made the withdrawal of forces by the colonial power a less attractive option. It was in Palestine where Menachem Begin, the leader of Jewish organisation *Irgun* from 1943–1948, described its members for the first time as freedom fighters fighting against government terror.

The second wave of terrorism received extensive support from various diasporas abroad and resorted much less to assassinations. The strategy of the second wave of terror was more complicated: the primary goal of terrorists was the elimination of the local police force and achieving its substitution by occupying military forces that were expected to be too clumsy in dealing with terrorists, but powerful enough to cause grievance among the population through their disproportionate responses to the actions of terror-

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[10] **Joel Shurkin**. Robust Terrorism. – Whole Earth Review. Fall, 1988. <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1510/is_n60/ai_6641070>, (accessed on 15 July 2007).
[11] **Rapoport** 2004, pp. 49–52.

ists. During the 'anticolonial' wave of terrorism it became a common practice to call terrorists fighting against colonial powers 'freedom fighters'.[12]

The occurrence of 'new left' terrorism was stimulated by the Vietnam War, which was seen to prove that modern states were vulnerable to relatively unsophisticated weapons and tactics. Many young people became deeply dissatisfied with the existing system and they gave rise to terror organisations such as the Red Army Faction in the West Germany, Italian Red Brigades and French Action Directe.

The target selection of the third wave of terrorists was remarkably similar to those of the first wave of international terrorism: prominent targets became very popular again. The 'new left' wave of terrorism produced some 700 hijackings, there were 409 international kidnapping incidents involving 951 hostages from 1968–1982, assassinated high-ranking officials included the prime ministers of Spain and Jordan, the former prime minister of Italy Aldo Moro and others. However, while anarchists assassinated officials with the aim of provoking disproportionate response, the 'new left' terrorists rather 'punished' their targets for various reasons. It is significant that 1/3 of all targets of the third wave of terrorism were US targets.

The third wave of terrorism witnessed much more international cooperation in counterterrorism activities. The UN adopted major conventions that outlawed hijacking, hostage taking, and financing terrorists. 'Freedom fighter' was no longer a popular term in the UN. Paradoxically, the Palestine Liberation Organization that had used terrorism to promote its policies received official UN status and was recognised by more than 100 states.[13]

The 'religious' wave of terrorism has Islam at its heart. It began in 1979 when three events occurred: The Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and a new Islamic century began. Iran called the US the 'Great Satan' and the war in Afghanistan helped to create a training and Islamic indoctrination system for volunteers from all over the Arab world.[14]

The 'religious' wave of terrorism has given prominence to suicide terrorism and witnessed an attempt to cause mass casualties by the use of chemical weapons by the Aum Shinrikyo sect in Tokyo in 1995. In 1983 the Shia organisation Hezbollah supported by Iran carried out massive suicide terrorist attacks on the positions of the US Marines and French paratroopers in Lebanon. These attacks resulted in serious casualties and strongly influenced the respective governments to withdraw their troops from Lebanon. These suicide attacks influenced the Tamil Tigers so much so that from 1980–2001

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[12] **Rapoport** 2004, pp. 53–54, 56.
[13] **Rapoport** 2004, pp. 56–61.
[14] **Rapoport** 2004, p. 61.

they carried out 75 out of the 186 (more than 40%) of suicide terrorist attacks in the world.[15]

The end of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Gulf War brought about a change in the main enemy of Islamic terrorists. Osama bin Laden found it unacceptable that since the 1991 Gulf War there were large numbers of US troops in Saudi Arabia whom he feared were there to stay indefinitely.[16] Soon after the Gulf War bin Laden moved from Saudi Arabia to Sudan and Al-Qaeda (the successor organisation of the Afghan Services Bureau) became an increasingly decentralised organisation defending Islam.[17] It must be mentioned that a specific feature of Islamic terrorists has been their desire to destroy their American targets – a pattern unknown in the third wave of terrorism. The single most disastrous act of terror that was committed on 11 September 2001 illustrates their methods of operation.[18]

The response of the international community to the attack of 11 September 2001 has been as astounding as the attack itself. Over 100 states participated directly or indirectly in the attack against Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.[19] Despite such a massive international support for deposing the Taliban and capturing the al-Qaeda leadership, success has been only partial and the man who challenged the sole superpower – Osama bin Laden – has yet to be apprehended at the time of writing this paper.

Rapoport's periodisation of the history of international terrorism has been challenged and discussed by several authors. Mark Sedgewick, for instance, has generally agreed with the four-wave periodisation of terrorism, but noted that the first wave could have started in Italy as early as in 1820s. He also stated that there have been more terrorist organisations between the1920s and the1960s than was usually thought and that the spread of terrorism has been influenced more by the successful cases of the adoption of terrorist strategies rather than by any other causes.[20]

Thomas Mockaitis has pointed out that whereas Rapoport has revealed significant general cycles of terrorism, there are considerable numbers of exceptions to his scheme. Thus, some terrorists of the 'new left' have identified themselves as anarchists, 'anticolonial' organisations were predominantly active after 1945 and not after 1920, and most acts of terror of the

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[15] **Robert A. Pape.** The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism. – American Political Science Review, 3/2003, p. 343.
[16] **Richard A. Clarke.** Kõigi vaenlaste vastu. Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2004, pp. 75–76, 153.
[17] **Mockaitis** 2007, p. 54.
[18] **Rapoport** 2004, p. 63.
[19] **Rapoport** 2004, p. 64.
[20] **Mark Sedgewick**. Inspiration and the Origins of Global Waves of Terrorism. – Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 2/2007, pp. 97–112.

fourth wave have been committed by followers of one religion (Islam) warranting a more specific focus on the subject. In addition, instability ought to be considered as one of the main causes of terrorism.[21]

Summing up, one can say that all critical views certainly must be taken into account in discussing the history of terrorism (and they again illustrate how complicated a subject it is), but so far Rapoport's periodisation of terrorism remains the most comprehensive analysis of the subject to date.

Having shown that, now in 2007, we live in the world washed by the wave of religious terrorism, it is time to take a look at the statistical data on terrorism in order to get a sense of how frequently terrorism occurs in our daily life.

Figures show that from 1 January 1968–1 July 2007, 33,817 acts of terror have been committed killing 51,128 and injuring 118,158 people. Of these, 21,855 acts were committed from 1 January 2001–1 April 2007, killing 38,304 people and injuring 73,834. The number of terrorist acts committed in the world in one year has grown from 1,740 in 2001 to 6,664 in 2006 with the number of deaths rising respectively from 4,579 to 12,073 (the majority of these atrocities were committed in the Middle East and South Asia).[22] Suicide terrorism has been shown to be the most lethal form of terrorism as from 1980–2001 suicide attacks constituted 3% of all terrorist attacks, but accounted for 48% of lives lost.[23]

The presented figures are high, but they must be considered in the context of other risks to life in the world. Jessica Wolfendale has presented an argument that 1,000–7,000 yearly deaths from terrorism in the world constitute only a fraction of the 40,000 *daily* deaths caused by starvation, the 500,000 people shot dead by light weapons annually, and the millions who die from various diseases.[24]

Thomas Mockaitis has discussed in depth the terrorist risk to American lives. Accordingly, an average American has a 1 in 88,000 lifetime odds of dying from a terrorist attack, a 1 in 55,928 odds of dying from a lightning strike, a 1 in 315 chance of being shot to death, a 1 in 229 chance of being

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[21]   **Mockaitis** 2007, p. 38.

[22]   **MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base**, <http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp>, (accessed on 14 September 2007). Figures from 1968–1997 include only international incidents of terrorism, from 1998–2007 both US domestic and international incidents of terrorism. Presented figures include terrorist attacks committed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

[23]   **Pape** 2003, p. 346.

[24]   **Jessica Wolfendale**. Terrorism, Security, and the Threat of Counterterrorism. – Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 1/2007, p.77.

killed by accidental fall, a 1 in 228 chance of dying in a car, and a 1 in 211 chance of dying from an assault.[25]

The situation in Europe seems to be fairly stable as well. In 2006 altogether 498 terrorist attacks were carried out in the EU with the vast majority of them causing limited material damage and deliberately avoiding casualties. There was only one (failed) Islamic terrorist attack in the EU (in Germany) that was aimed at causing mass casualties, and one uncovered terror plot in the UK having the same objective. At the same time, 257 (36.4%) of the 706 apprehended terrorist suspects were arrested on suspicion of being connected to Islamist terror activities. France, Spain and the UK are the EU members most affected by terrorism, whereas Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia are the least affected member states.[26]

Considering the information mentioned above, it seems that the risk of falling victim to terrorism is really not that serious in the modern (developed) world – after all it seems to be lower than that of being struck by lightning. Yet we should keep in mind two things: (1) using fear as a weapon is not expected to kill the target, but to shape target audience's behaviour in a desired manner, and (2) there is always the 'shadow of the future' meaning that calculated probabilities are based on the past and terrorists may come up with new, much more destructive acts of terror.

4. Does terrorism work?

Asking such a question may seem a purely rhetorical exercise in light of the previous findings. However, that is not so. Leaving aside the emotional and psychological impacts of terrorism, it is necessary to establish whether and to what extent terrorists have managed to influence various state policies. In other words: have terrorists been successful in coercing states through fear into a desired behaviour pattern?

Various studies have sought an answer to these questions, and – strangely enough – ended up with radically different conclusions.

To begin with, it is useful to take a look at what goals terrorists have pursued and what strategies they have used for these purposes. Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter have studied these issues and published some interesting findings. They treated terrorism as a form of costly signalling. Terrorists are usually too weak to impose their will directly, but they try to achieve their

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[25] **Mockaitis** 2007, p. 79.
[26] **EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2007.** Hague: Europol, 2007, pp. 14, 17, 26.

goals through the changing of a target audience's perceptions of their determination and ability to impose costs on the audience.

Five goals pursued through terrorist activity through time have had enduring importance. They are: (1) regime change, (2) territorial change, (3) policy change, (4) social control and (5) status quo maintenance. These objectives have been pursued through five general strategies: (1) attrition, (2) intimidation, (3) provocation, (4) spoiling and (5) outbidding. Suicide terrorism has also been used for pursuing these rational strategies. Whereas the religious motivation of persons committing suicidal acts of terror could be viewed as irrational, organisations employing these people pursue mostly identifiable rational goals.

After investigating how various strategies have been used and their weaknesses and strengths, the authors' first conclusion was that the crucial element in success of various terror campaigns is information. Terrorists have to be well informed as to how to change perceptions and communicate their will precisely. Similarly, the success of counterstrategies also depends on information. The second conclusion of the study touched upon the regime type being targeted by terrorists. It was concluded that democracy seems to be more susceptible to various terrorist strategies than other regime types.[27]

Robert Pape's study on suicide terrorism presents a strong argument in support of the effectiveness of terrorism. Pape's argument begins with a statement that in suicide terrorism, the coercer is the weaker actor and the target is the stronger. The strength of terrorists' commitment to cause destruction is underlined by the terrorists' willingness to sacrifice their own lives in the process. The great destructiveness of suicide terrorism strengthens the message communicated to the attacked state and creates in it the expectation of future punishment in the case of continuing confrontation. Furthermore, selecting democracy as a target increases the terrorists' chances of experiencing a restrained response as democracies use violence more discriminately. Such unpunished or moderately punished terrorist acts encourage their repetition. However, a specification must be made: terrorists could be successful in coercing states only if they pursue moderate goals and do not try to force states to abandon their vital interests. All in all, Pape concluded that from 1980–2001 50% of coercive terror campaigns involving suicide terrorism succeeded in changing state policies. At the same time only 30% of international economic and military coercion altered the policies of coerced states.[28]

Max Abrams carried out an analysis of the strategic effectiveness of 28 terrorist organisations listed by the US Department of State since 2001. He

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[27] **Andrew H. Kydd**, **Barbara F. Walter**. The Strategies of Terrorism. – International Security, 1/2006, pp.50–52, 79–80.
[28] **Pape** 2003, pp. 346–347, 349–351, 355.

found that terrorist organisations managed to achieve only three out of their 42 main policy objectives equalling only a 7% success rate. Moreover, the success rate of terror campaigns has depended crucially on target selection – groups that attacked mostly military and political targets (and less civilian targets) were more successful in achieving their objectives. The reason for such an outcome is that states tend to interpret assaults on their civilians as indications of terrorists' desire to destroy the whole society and values of the target country. Abrams concluded that terrorism is a flawed method of coercion because; regardless of the actual policy objectives of terrorists, the attacks on the society and values of the target state are perceived by the latter as an existential threat. Such a perception leads to disregarding the actual demands of terrorists (that could be actually fairly moderate).[29]

Thus, the success of terror campaigns is considered to depend on the availability of sufficient information to terrorist and states, type of objectives pursued by terrorists, the regime type they try to coerce, and the type of particular targets they try to attack. Terror is a weapon of weak actors and it has been found to work more often in the cases where state interests are not high, terrorists moderate their use of violence and do not threaten the fundamental values of the coerced society. Democracies are considered to be more susceptible to coercion and modifying their policies under such circumstances.

At this point one may wonder if terrorism threatening the use of or using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has been more successful in achieving its aims. Available data does not support such a suggestion. In the 20th century, worldwide, 18 terrorist attacks took place employing biological agents. They caused nine deaths and 985 casualties. From 1970–1999 there were 12 chemical and biological attacks on American soil producing one fatality and 772 injuries. The existing information on the Aum Shinrikyo sect's activities indicates that the terrorists were determined to and attempted multiple times to produce mass casualties using botulinum toxin, anthrax, sarin and cyanide. These attempts proved only partially successful as the terrorists lacked 'know-how' on the use of biological and chemical weapons (though the number of potential victims was tens of thousands of people).[30] In addition, it has been shown that chemical weapons are not as lethal as traditionally perceived – they only accounted for less than 1% of casualties in Iran-Iraq war and for 5% of casualties in the First World War, and those who were

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[29] **Max Abrams**. Why Terrorism Does Not Work. – International Security, 2/2006, pp. 51–56, 59–60.
[30] **Seth W. Carus**. The Threat of Bioterrorism. – Strategic Forum, No.127, 1997; **David C. Rapoport**. Terrorism and Weapons of the Apocalypse. – National Security Studies Quarterly, 3/1999, pp. 57, 59.

gassed had better recovery chances than soldiers wounded by traditional weapons.[31]

These figures suggest that so far terrorists armed with WMD have not been able to achieve their goals any more successfully than terrorists employing other methods. In the light of the information presented above – regarding states' concern over protecting their basic values – it is also reasonable to assume that states' response to such an attempt of coercion is likely to be very dramatic and massive.

All in all, it could seem that terrorism has not been such an effective tool of coercion whether relying on WMD or not and it does not occur that frequently in our daily lives. After all, the probabilities and comparison of causes of death presented in the previous section seem to support such a perception. It is not necessarily so. Terrorism is used to induce fear, and the current overwhelming general public concern about threat of terrorism indicates that, despite doubts over the effectiveness of terrorism in altering states' policies, it has been very effective in influencing peoples' minds.

5. Terrorist organisations: is al-Qaeda a special case?

Research on terrorist organisations has previously moved in two main directions: (1) analysts have focused on compiling profiles of various individual terrorists and their terror groups, their motivation and methods of operation; (2) terrorism has been treated mainly as a group activity and the focus of respective research has been on understanding the inner dynamic of the group, its ideological commitment and identity. The aim of applying these approaches has been to gain insights into how various groups operate and what their weaknesses are (and consequently – how to defeat them). These analytical frameworks were very influential in studying the leftist and nationalist terrorist groups in the 1970s and the 1980s[32], and they corresponded to the structure of terrorist organisations of today. Earlier terrorist groups were quite closed, had a clear inner hierarchy, and their operations were organised in a military fashion – they were well planned and supported by the necessary financial and material means. Good examples of such organisations are the Irish Republican Army and the Palestine Liberation Organiza-

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[31]   Rapoport 1999, pp. 52–53.
[32]   **Audrey Kurth Cronin**. How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups. – International Security, 1/2006, pp.11–12.

tion of which the latter actually attempted to transform itself into an army operating from Lebanon[33], but was stopped by the Israeli invasion.

The lifespan of the majority (90%) of terrorist organisations has not exceeded 1–2 years, and those that managed to cross that threshold, disappeared in a decade. The main reasons for disappearance of terrorist organisations have been: (1) the capture or killing of the leader, (2) failure to transition to the next generation, (3) the achievement of the group's aims, (4) the transition to a legitimate political process, (5) the loss of popular support, (6) repression, (7) the transition from terrorism to other forms of violence. Clearly, there are organisations that have managed to survive well after the wave of terrorism with which they occurred had receded. Among these survivors are a number of religiously motivated organisations indicating the strength and continuity of religious motivation.[34]

Al-Qaeda seems to be emerging as one such terrorist organisations of great vitality. Despite making its infrastructure visible (and thus vulnerable) before 11 September 2001, it has survived the coordinated assault of many countries led by the US aimed at killing or capturing its leadership, destroying its infrastructure, denying refuge, and seizing al-Qaeda's financial assets. Moreover, al-Qaeda has actually lost its refuges in Afghanistan and elsewhere, but has managed to continue preparing and carrying out acts of terror in many countries. The terror attacks of 20 November 2003 in Istanbul, 11 March 2004 in Madrid, 7 July 2005 in London, and 30 June 2007 in Glasgow (and several failed, and planned, but intercepted major plots) testify to al-Qaeda's ability to survive, adapt and continue its operations.

It could be said that the al-Qaeda that attacked World Trade Center in 2001, does not exist any more. A very hierarchical organisation with bin Laden and his advisory council at the top supervising the activities of five different committees[35] has transformed into something that has been called a 'network', a 'social movement' or even a 'transnational advocacy'. Such comparisons arise from al-Qaeda's extremely fluid operating methods that are a reminder of *auftragstaktik* in that they are based rather on common mission statement and objectives than on standard operating procedures and rigid organisational structures.[36]

Al-Qaeda has also been compared to a nebula of cooperating, but largely independent entities that share a common ideology. The number of different groups united under al-Qaeda's umbrella has been estimated to be no less

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[33]   **Rapoport** 2004, p. 63.
[34]   **Cronin** 2006, pp. 13, 17.
[35]   **Mockaitis** 2007, p. 54.
[36]   **Cronin** 2006, p. 33.

than 24. The estimated number of operatives has varied from 5,000 to 20,000 and al-Qaeda is thought to be present in 76 countries.[37]

Al-Qaeda began to evolve into a network of affiliated organisations after bin Laden's move to Sudan. The Islamic People's Conference that took place in Khartoum in 1995 provided al-Qaeda with an excellent opportunity to forge ties with various Islamic organisations. That process culminated in 1998 when bin Laden announced that a 'World Islamic Jihad against Jews and Crusaders' had been formed.[38] After the US-led invasion of Afghanistan that forced the organisation out of the country, al-Qaeda has been relying increasingly on the Internet to keep contact with its members and organisations.

Al-Qaeda's evolution into a social movement – i.e. transformation beyond the chain of networked organisations – is suggested by the involvement of militarily untrained people in carrying out terrorist acts. The Head of the British Security Service Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller said in 2006 that her subordinates were monitoring as many as 200 different groupings with 1,600 individuals in them, that were actively plotting or facilitating terror acts in the UK and overseas. There were 30 top-priority plots under thorough investigation. They had links to al-Qaeda in Pakistan, but these were British citizens who were preparing them. It all was taking place with the background of the approval by some 100,000 British Muslims of the atrocities of 7 July 2005 in London.[39] These figures suggest that al-Qaeda is taking advantage of the alienation and identity problems of Muslims (particularly of the second-and third-generation immigrants) in the Western societies. It offers these youths alienated from their parents and society kinship and friendship through 'bridging persons'.[40] The Internet is used to keep contact with and indoctrinate the youth having limited knowledge of Islam; the same channel is used to disseminate information on the practical aspects of carrying out terror attacks.

Accepting that al-Qaeda has transcended the status of organisation, allows for the use of various other analogies for understanding its behaviour and evolution. One such approach lies in treating it as a transnational advocacy network. In essence, these networks are groups that work across borders to promote various issues or advocate various causes, and they may

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[37] **James M. Lutz**, **Brenda J. Lutz.** Global Terrorism. London, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 82; **Cronin** 2006, p. 34; **Mockaitis** 2007, p. 55.

[38] **Mockaitis** 2007, pp. 55–56.

[39] **Philip Johnston**. Terrorists are recruiting in our schools, says MI5 boss. – The Daily Telegraph, 11 November 2006.

[40] **Cronin** 2006, pp. 35–36.

consist of many types of players.[41] Treating al-Qaeda as a transnational advocacy network shows a certain analogy to the activities of Amnesty International and Osama bin Laden. For example, their criticism aimed at the US could be seen as an attempt to hold the nation accountable for perceived grievance. In doing that, Amnesty International relies on norms and shame, whereas bin Laden resorts to large-scale violence. Moreover, it has been said that the simultaneous rise of international terrorism, international human rights movements and other world culture movements is natural as they are aspects of the same phenomenon with a difference in preferred means and ways of influencing of their target audiences.[42]

A few words must be also said about the financing of terrorism, as al-Qaeda represents a very special case in this area as well. Terrorists of the first three waves were funded to various extents by ethnic Diasporas, states and profits gained from criminal activities waves. Notably, the anarchist terrorists of the first wave had to be very self-reliant for funding and they frequently used bank robberies for that purpose.[43] Al-Qaeda also appears self-reliant in funding its activities, but the origins of its funds are very different. It has been estimated that the personal wealth of Osama bin Laden is about 280–300 million dollars. This money is invested and used to support various terror activities through a large number of front companies. These sums are complemented by considerable amounts of money collected through various Muslim charities.[44]

Thus, al-Qaeda truly appears to be an exceptional case among terrorist organisations. It is rather amazing that one organisation has managed to survive the coordinated assault of many countries and transform into a self-funded global Islamic movement that is very skilfully tapping into the grievances of Muslims all over the world. It has learned to use all means and possibilities of the global society to engage more and more people, and exert stronger pressure on target governments.

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[41] **Victor Asal**, **Brian Nussbaum**, **D. William Harrington**. Terrorism as Transnational Advocacy: An Organizational and Tactical Examination. – Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 1/2007, p. 17.
[42] **Asal, Nussbaum, Harrington** 2007, pp. 33–34.
[43] **Rapoport** 2004, pp. 51, 54–55, 57.
[44] **Kimberley L. Tkachuk.** Terrorism's Financial Lifeline: Can It Be Severed? – Strategic Forum, No.191, 2002, p. 4.

6. Global "war on terror": a battle between structures or a conflict of thoughts and ideologies?

Nine days after the attack on World Trade Center the US President George W. Bush addressed a joint session of Congress with following words:

> 'Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.'[45]

This statement (though quite unclear with regard to the desired end-state of the war, as terrorism is essentially the use of fear for various purposes by various proponents) led to the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. As of 2007, both conflicts have evolved into escalating counterinsurgency campaigns with the participation of al-Qaeda, and proved that defeating al-Qaeda is a very complicated matter.

Growing recognition that 'war on terror' is not just a physical confrontation, but rather a struggle of ideas and mindsets, has been reflected in the 2006 National Security Strategy of the United States of America:

> From the beginning, the War on Terror has been both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas – a fight against the terrorists and against their murderous ideology. In the short run, the fight involves using military force and other instruments of national power to kill or capture the terrorists, deny them safe haven or control of any nation; prevent them from gaining access to WMD; and cut off their sources of support. In the long run, winning the war on terror means winning the battle of ideas, for it is ideas that can turn the disenchanted into murderers willing to kill innocent victims.
>
> While the War on Terror is a battle of ideas, it is not a battle of religions. The transnational terrorists confronting us today exploit the proud religion of Islam to serve a violent political vision: the establishment, by terrorism and subversion, of a totalitarian empire that denies all political and religious freedom. These terrorists distort the idea of jihad into a call for murder against those they regard as apostates or unbelievers – including Christians, Jews, Hindus, other religious traditions, and all Muslims who disagree with them. Indeed, most of the

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[45] **George W. Bush.** Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, 20 September 2001.

terrorist attacks since September 11 have occurred in Muslim coun-
tries – and most of the victims have been Muslims.[46]

Despite that recognition, the first paragraph seems to be stressing the mili-
tary aspect of the struggle against terrorist groups. Whether 'denying safe
haven' means more operations like 'Enduring Freedom' and/or 'Iraqi Free-
dom', and how exactly the US leadership intends to use military force in
support of a struggle of ideas, remains to be seen. It is possible that the US
strategy actually suggests plain attrition: the US could be simply aiming at
sustaining a certain level of violence over a long period of time in order to
convince al-Qaeda-led radicals that they have no chance of coercing the US.

Removing the perceived grievances of Muslims and preventing them
from being recruited by al-Qaeda, is a very complicated issue. Although the
US National Security Strategy states that '…terrorism is not the inevitable
by-product of poverty'[47], poverty is a major cause of grievances, and three
billion people are living on less than two Euros a day[48] this means that there
is a potentially large number of people who might be recruited by radicals
advocating the use of indiscriminate violence in pursuit of their aims.

Democratisation as a strategy for tackling terrorism seems to have a lim-
ited potential. Historically, it has not had much effect in reducing levels of
terrorism and in weak democracies can actually have the opposite effect.[49]

There is also a slight possibility that the radical version of Islam propa-
gated by al-Qaeda could be discredited from within Islam. There seem to
have been developments in this respect, as a prominent Egyptian jihadist has
reviewed his beliefs and found them to contradict several fundamental as-
pects of Islam. It has apparently caused quite an upheaval in the ranks of
jihadists.[50]

In short, there seems to be no short-term solutions to reducing terrorism.
There are a number of causes of grievances and removing them cannot be
but time-consuming. Similarly, discrediting and eroding the philosophy that
advocates the use of violence in response to perceived grievance will take
quite some time, given that there are no dramatic events radically changing
the course of history.

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[46] **The National Security Strategy** of the United States of America 2006, p. 9.
[47] **The National Security Strategy** of the United States of America 2006, p. 9.
[48] A Secure Europe in a Better World. **European Security Strategy 2003**, p. 2.
[49] **Cronin** 2006, p. 43.
[50] **Ian Black**. Violence Won't Work: How Author of 'Jihadists' Bible' Stirred up a
Storm. – The Guardian, 27 July 2007.

7. The future: fading or escalating religious terrorism?

The purpose of this study has been to review the history of terrorism, its present state and its future. It has been shown that in last 120–130 years terrorism has gone through four distinct stages and presently we are experiencing the fourth wave of terrorism. There have been contradicting views on the effectiveness of terrorism and so far terrorists have lacked skills to use WMD in the most destructive manner. Simultaneously, al-Qaeda has evolved into a movement that operates in over 70 countries and is present in the cyberspace. It has survived attempts to destroy it by military means and adapted to a new situation. It has been able to extend its influence to Muslim communities in European countries. Does this mean that we are facing the prospect of ever escalating terrorism in Europe? What chances do we have to defeat al-Qaeda?

If al-Qaeda were a traditional terrorist group, it would be reasonable to forecast its relatively likely demise in next 20 years along with the receding fourth wave of terrorism.[51] However, the history of terrorism has shown that religious groups can exist for a very long time.

The history of terrorism also suggests that al-Qaeda will not end if Osama bin Laden is killed. That is even truer now when al-Qaeda has ceased to be an organisation with a rigid structure and has evolved into a movement that is largely supported and carried forward by local initiative. Al-Qaeda has transitioned to a second, third and even fourth generation, and it is operating with a fairly coherent strategy articulating its goals quite comprehensively. Al-Qaeda has neither achieved its goals nor is transitioning toward a political process. It still experiences sufficient popular support and is very visible in the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan where military repression has achieved little against it. One can rather claim the opposite – excessive reliance on military force has been counterproductive in Iraq and Afghanistan. The latter has, perhaps, even pushed al-Qaeda's evolution further – toward becoming a full-grown insurgency.[52]

The chances of cutting al-Qaeda's funding appear rather limited. Firstly, it has been established that approximately 50% of world's money flows through offshore banks[53] meaning that it is physically extremely complicated to trace the funds of terrorists. Secondly, al-Qaeda is increasingly engaging in criminal activities (e.g. narcotics trafficking) to fund its activities.[54] These activities will be strongly facilitated by another record poppy harvest in

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[51]   **Rapoport** 2004, p. 66.
[52]   **Cronin** 2006, pp. 39–46.
[53]   **Tkachuk** 2002, p. 2.
[54]   **Cronin** 2006, pp. 45–46.

Afghanistan that is expected to constitute 8,200 tonnes in 2007 – 34% growth from 2006.[55] Thus, al-Qaeda's funds are not only hard to trace, but the movement appears to be looking for and developing new sources of funding.

As if these facts and figures were not sufficient cause for concern, al-Qaeda has been found trying to acquire weapons-grade uranium[56] increasing worries about truly devastating mass-casualty terrorist acts taking place. A terrorist act with the use of a nuclear weapon is likely to bring along a totally unpredictable response and consequences.

What can we deduce from these statements? The situation is worrisome if not to say grim. Al-Qaeda seems to be well beyond the traditional causes of demise of terrorist organisations and has achieved unprecedented influence, reach and means. The struggle against al-Qaeda has evolved from a struggle against an organisation trying to evict the US forces from the Middle East, and reduce the US influence in the region to a struggle of minds, a struggle of ideas and worldviews. The western coalition is in growing trouble in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it has been said that the current developments could in the worst-case scenario lead to a systemic war.

However, there might be a tiny ray of hope in the darkness. It is the denial of humanity in the methods that al-Qaeda uses. It is something that some old jihadists have come to realise and are trying to convey to others blinded by rage. Our hope is the human being who lives in each of us.

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