

**ARTICLE**

***Questioning the Concept of  
'New Terrorism'***

***By Alexander Spencer<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Spencer is a Teaching Fellow at the Geschwister-Scholl-Institute of Political Science, which is part of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) Munich, Germany. He has a B.A. from the University of Sussex and a M.Sc. from the University of Bristol and is currently completing his PhD at the LMU in Munich.

## ABSTRACT

Many scholars, government analysts and politicians point out that since the mid 1990s 'terrorism' has changed into an inherently new form with new characteristics. They have articulated the concept of 'new terrorism', which involves different actors, motivations, aims, tactics and actions, compared to the 'old' concept of terrorism used in the mid twentieth century. However, do the established characteristics of terrorism today justify the concept of 'new terrorism'? The aim of this paper is not to challenge the established characteristics of terrorism today, but to question the validity of the term 'new terrorism' by showing that many of the trends underlying it can be identified in terrorism years ago. Nevertheless, 'new terrorism' is being used to justify 'new' counter-terrorism measures. The paper sets the foundations for a more in-depth look at the necessity and effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures after 9/11.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of terrorism is one of the most disputed terms in the social sciences. The problem of defining the term 'terrorism' is well known and has been examined extensively.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the problem of distinguishing it from guerrilla warfare, crime or mad serial killers, the well-known phrase 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter', is often used to highlight the problem of implying a moral judgement when classifying the term 'terrorism'. If one identifies with the victim of the attack, then it is considered terrorism, but if one can identify with the perpetrator it

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Omar Malik, *Enough of the Definition of Terrorism!*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001), H. H. A. Cooper, "Terrorism – The Problem of Definition Revisited", *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 44, No. 6, (2001), pp. 881-893, Beril Dedeoglu, "Bermuda Triangle: Comparing Official Definitions of Terrorist Activity", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (2003), pp. 81-110, Alex P. Schmid, "Frameworks for Conceptualising Terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (2004), pp. 197-221 and Boaz Ganor, "Defining Terrorism: Is one Man's Terrorist another Man's Freedom Fighter?", *Police Practice and Research*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (2002), pp. 287-304.

is not.<sup>3</sup> A definition that is widely accepted is still lacking. Some authors such as Walter Laqueur even believe that “*a comprehensive definition of terrorism... does not exist nor will it be found in the foreseeable future.*”<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Simon highlights that there are at least 212 different definitions of terrorism in use throughout the world, with 90 of them used by governments and other institutions.<sup>5</sup> In one of the most rigorous attempts to define terrorism, Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman examine 109 different definitions of terrorism. Thereby they identify 22 elements in these definitions, calculate the frequency of their occurrence, and issue a lengthy consensus definition incorporating most of these elements:<sup>6</sup>

*Terrorism is an anxiety-inspired method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-)clandestine individuals, groups, 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 randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims, and the main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought.*<sup>7</sup>

In a more recent study, Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler examine 73 definitions of terrorism from 55 articles in three leading academic journals on the topic, and come to the conclusion that “[t]errorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Brian M. Jenkins, *The Study of Terrorism: Definitional Problems*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1980), pp. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey D. Simon, *The Terrorist Trap*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 29.

<sup>6</sup> See table 1.3 in appendix A pp. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Alex P. Schmid & Albert J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature*, (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 28

<sup>8</sup> Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur & Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, “The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, No. 4, (2004), pp. 786.

Whatever definition of terrorism one might adopt, many scholars, government analysts and politicians claim that since the mid 1990s 'terrorism' has changed into an inherently new form with new characteristics. They have articulated a 'new' concept, which involves different actors, motivations, aims, tactics and actions, compared to the 'old' concept of terrorism used in the mid twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Since September the 11<sup>th</sup> (hereafter 9/11) this 'new' type of terrorism has greatly gained in prominence and without doubt has become a central issue throughout the world. Prior to 9/11, some of the most famous terrorism experts such as Walter Laqueur, Ashton B. Carter, John Deutch and Philip Zelikow argued for the existence of a 'new terrorism' and proposed the concepts '*postmodern*'<sup>10</sup> and '*catastrophic*'<sup>11</sup> terrorism in articles. Since then Walter Laqueur suggests the "*there has been a radical transformation, if not a revolution, in the character of terrorism*".<sup>12</sup> Bruce Hoffman points out that the 'new terrorist' "*represents a very different and potentially far more lethal threat than the more familiar 'traditional' terrorist groups*".<sup>13</sup>

Do the established characteristics of terrorism today justify the concept of 'new terrorism'? The aim of this paper is not to challenge the established characteristics of terrorism today, but to question the validity of the term 'new terrorism' by showing that many of the trends underlying it can be identified in terrorism years ago. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the adjective 'new' means '*not existing before*' or '*discovered recently or now for the first time*'.<sup>14</sup> The term 'new' implies that there is something 'old'. They are time-dependent concepts and one considers there to be something different between old and new and that there is a clear distinction or break between the two. It is this idea of 'newness' the paper disputes. It

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<sup>9</sup> See for example Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), Ian O. Lesser, Bruce Hoffman, John Arquilla, David F. Ronfeldt, Michele Zanini & Brian M. Jenkins, *Countering the New Terrorism*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1999) or Stefan M. Aubrey, *The New Dimension of International Terrorism*, (Zurich: Vdf Hochschulverlag, (2004).

<sup>10</sup> Walter Laqueur, "Postmodern Terrorism", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 5, (1996), pp. 24-36.

<sup>11</sup> Ashton B. Carter, John Deutch & Philip Zelikow, "Catastrophic Terrorism", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 6, (1999), pp. 80-94.

<sup>12</sup> Laqueur, *The New Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (London: St. Andrew's University Press, 1998), pp. 200.

<sup>14</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, Second Edition (revised), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

is vital for future research, especially on counter-terrorism measures, to overcome the distinction between 'old' and 'new terrorism'. Many argue that this 'new terrorism' clearly requires a set of 'new' counter-terrorism policies to deal with it effectively. *"Nothing less than a sea-change in our thinking about terrorism and the policies required to counter it will be required."*<sup>15</sup> Others such as Ian Lesser go further and judge that this 'new terrorism' *"renders much previous analysis of terrorism based on established groups obsolete"*.<sup>16</sup> The acceptance of the term 'new terrorism' will have great influence on the direction and funding of counter-terrorism measures. However, the distinction between old and new terrorism is artificial and some extent dangerous, as it can be used to justify a whole new set of rushed restrictive governmental counter-measures without these being democratically debated, publicly discussed, independently monitored or even necessary. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on 'new terrorism' could lead to a neglect of other terrorisms not currently in the public eye.

The paper will firstly establish some of the characteristics of the different types of more traditional or 'old terrorism'. Following this, it will consider some of the features that have been attributed to 'new terrorism'. The third part will then analyse some of these aspects and put forward the argument that there are clear empirical and logical reasons for questioning the label of 'new terrorism'. The final section summarises the main findings and draws tentative conclusions.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF 'OLD TERRORISM'**

Terrorism as a form of political violence is by no means a new phenomenon. One of the earliest groups cited in the literature are the Sicarii, who were a Zealot religious sect fighting against the Roman rule in Palestine between AD 66-73.<sup>17</sup> During the Middle Ages a religious sect of Ismailis and Nizari called 'Assassins' struggled against the empire of Saladin and in the sixteenth century small 'terrorist' groups in

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<sup>15</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 212.

<sup>16</sup> Lesser et al, *Countering the New Terrorism*, pp. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Peter. Waldmann, *Terrorismus – Provokation der Macht*, (Munich: Gerling Akademie Verlag, 1998), pp. 99-103.

Albania and other regions resisted the armies of the Ottoman Empire. The term 'terror' was first used in 1795 as a policy to protect the fragile government of the French Republic from counter-revolutionaries.<sup>18</sup> From around the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War revolutionaries and anarchists used bombings and assassinations as frequent weapons in their struggle against autocracy. After the Second World War terrorism became an important part of the anti-colonial struggles. As Wilkinson points out, this has an important significance as it has been "*the only clear instances in modern history where sub-state organizations using terror as their major weapon were able to achieve their long-term political goals, i.e., the withdrawal of the colonial power and establishment of a form of government favoured by the insurgents.*"<sup>19</sup> Although, it is debatable to exactly what extent terrorism contributed to de-colonisation, it without doubt did influence the withdrawal of the colonial powers alongside a variety of other factors. Many scholars have argued that the period between the late 1960s and the late 1980s is marked by traditional or so called 'old terrorism', which can be roughly divided into different types of terrorism such as left and right-wing as well as ethno-national separatist terrorism. Although in reality many of these 'old terrorist' groups were a combination of these different types with specific features, it is argued that they all had some general characteristics.<sup>20</sup>

For one, they are classed to have predominantly secular motivations and a rational political reason for their acts of terrorism.<sup>21</sup> For example left-wing terrorist groups aimed to use violence to politicise the working class masses and get them to rise up against the capitalist system. While ethno-nationalist terrorist wanted either independence for their ethnic group, in the form of a separation of their territory from another country, the creation of their own sovereign nation state, or the merger with

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<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the early history of terrorism see: Andrew Sinclair, *An Anatomy of Terror – A History of Terrorism*, (London: Macmillan, 2003), Sean K. Anderson & Stephen Sloan, *Terrorism: Assassins to Zealots*, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2003) or Celeb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror – A History of Warfare against Civilians*, (New York: Random House, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Paul Wilkinson, "International Terrorism: New Risks to World Order" in John Baylis & N. J. Rengger, *Dilemmas of World Politics*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 230.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Enders & Todd Sandler, "Is Transnational Terrorism Becoming More Threatening? A Time-Series Investigation", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 44, No. 3, (2000), pp. 310.

<sup>21</sup> Kumar Ramakrishna & Andrew Tan, "The New Terrorism: Diagnosis and Prescriptions" in Andrew Tan & Kumar Ramakrishna (eds.), *The New Terrorism – Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies*, (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002), pp. 6.

another state. Therefore their specific demands were often rationally negotiable. For example when they wanted the release of certain jailed comrades, or payment in exchange for the release of hostages in a hijacking. Even where demands were difficult to meet, such as the reunification of a divided country, the creation of an ethno-national homeland or the abolishment of the existing the capitalist system, in many circumstances there appeared to be room for dialogue or negotiation.<sup>22</sup>

Connected to this, it is believed that violence by 'old terrorists' in general was "*targeted and proportionate in scope and intensity to the practical political objectives being pursued*".<sup>23</sup> Terrorists did not want to use excessive indiscriminate violence themselves as this would reduce their claim of legitimacy and alienate them from supporters, therefore reducing their access to new recruits and funding. Thus, by keeping the level of casualties low terrorists "*preserved their eligibility for a place at the bargaining table and, ultimately, a role in successor governments.*"<sup>24</sup> 'Old terrorism' was seen to be discriminate, with terrorist groups selecting their targets very carefully. Precision attacks were usually directed at well-defined highly symbolic targets of the authority they opposed. This could include leading politicians, government officials, members of the aristocracy, military or banking sector or other symbolic targets such as government buildings. They tried to use their actions as a means of propaganda to increase their popular support. As Walter Laqueur points out "*[i]t was, more often than not, 'propaganda by deed'.*"<sup>25</sup> Terrorists wanted maximum publicity for their acts, playing for an audience and spreading their ideological message. Brian Jenkins famously points out that "*terrorism is theatre*" and that terrorist attacks were often choreographed for the media.<sup>26</sup> An attack was nearly always followed by a communiqué taking credit for the act, laying out demands, or explaining why it was carried out against that particular target. The targeted violence was generally perpetrated with conventional tactics such as hand-held guns, machine

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<sup>22</sup> Adrian Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism and the International Political System*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), pp. 52-70.

<sup>23</sup> Steven Simon & Daniel Benjamin, "America and the New Terrorism", *Survival*, Vol.42, No. 1, (2000), pp. 65.

<sup>24</sup> Simon & Benjamin, "America and the New Terrorism", op. cit., pp. 66.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Laqueur, *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Continuum, 2003), pp. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Brian. Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict", in David Carlton & Carlo. Schaerf (eds.), *International Terrorism and World Security*, (London: Croom Helm, 1975), pp. 16.

guns, as well as bombs. They showed little interest in new tactics and non-conventional weapons such as weapons of mass destruction.<sup>27</sup> In general they tried not to cause innocent casualties as this would alienate the population and go against their aim of inciting a popular uprising. In some cases they even expressed sorrow for the accidental death of someone in the attack.<sup>28</sup>

A further widely accepted characteristic of 'old terrorism' is its association with state sponsorship or support.<sup>29</sup> This secret involvement of states with terrorists groups varied widely with often only little verifiable data proving a connection. It was seen as a cheap method of attacking and damaging another country without initiating a full-scale war, and within the Cold War framework, terrorists often became proxies for both superpowers and middle powers.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, it is stressed that 'old terrorism' has a clear hierarchical organisation with fairly well-defined command and control structures. Although it is impossible to clearly demarcate the different layers, James Fraser argues that 'old terrorism' is organised like a pyramid, with the leadership, who decide on the overall policy and plans, at the top. This is followed by a larger layer of active terrorists who carry out the attacks and are often specialised in certain activities such as bomb-making, assassination, or surveillance. On the next level there are the active supporters who supply intelligence, weapons, supplies, communications, transportation and safe houses. At the bottom you have the passive supporters who agree with the goals of the terrorist organisation and spread their ideas and express their emotional support.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Kai Hirschmann, "Internationaler Terrorismus gestern und heute: Entwicklung, Ausrichtung, Ziele", in Hans Frank & Kai Hirschmann, (eds.) *Die weltweite Gefahr – Terrorismus als internationale Herausforderung*, (Berlin: Berlin Verlag Arno Spitz, 2002), pp. 39.

<sup>28</sup> Hans J. Horchem, "West Germany's Red Army Anarchists" in William Gutteridge (ed.) "*The New Terrorism*", (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986)pp. 199-217.

<sup>29</sup> Rushworth M. Kidder, "Unmasking State-Sponsored Terrorism", *Christian Science Monitor*, (May 14, 1986).

<sup>30</sup> Cindy C. Combs, *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (London: Prentice-Hall, 2000), pp. 66-86.

<sup>31</sup> James Fraser cited in Harry Henderson, *Global Terrorism – The Complete Reference Guide*, (New York: Checkmark Books, 2001), pp. 17.



## DEFINING FEATURES OF 'NEW TERRORISM'

Although it is difficult to say where and when 'new terrorism' exactly started, many point to the mid 1990s, and the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in 1993 as well as the sarin gas attack in the Tokyo underground by the Aum Shinrikyo cult in 1995. It is said, that this terrorism has a different set of new characteristics in comparison to the traditional or 'old terrorism' mentioned above.<sup>32</sup>

Many supporters of the concept 'new terrorism' point to the prominence of religion, mainly radical Islam, as one of its main characteristics.<sup>33</sup> Whereas 'old terrorism' was primarily secular in its orientation and inspiration, terrorism linked to religious fanaticism is on the increase. According to Nadine Gurr and Benjamin Cole only two out of sixty-four international terrorist organisations in 1980 could be classified as religious. This figure has risen sharply to twenty-five out of fifty-eight by 1995.<sup>34</sup> 'New terrorism' is often portrayed as a terrorism, which rejects all other ways and promotes an uncompromising view of the world in accordance with the belief of the religion. Bruce Hoffman believes that this religious motivation is the defining characteristic of 'new terrorism', which produces "*radically different value systems, mechanisms of legitimisation and justification, concepts of morality and, world view*".<sup>35</sup>

Related to the religious motivation, many in the 'new terrorism' supporters point out that another of the main features of 'new terrorism' is the increasing willingness to use excessive indiscriminate violence. Laqueur argues that "*the new terrorism is different in character, aiming not at clearly defined political demands but at the destruction of society and the elimination of large sections of the population.*"<sup>36</sup> Hoffman highlights that these groups have caused 60 per cent of all fatalities while

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<sup>32</sup> Simon and Benjamin, "America and the New Terrorism", op. cit., pp. 59.

<sup>33</sup> See for example Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000)

<sup>34</sup> Nadine Gurr & Benjamin Cole, *The New Face of Terrorism: Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 28-29.

<sup>35</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 87.

<sup>36</sup> Laqueur, *New Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 81.

only being responsible for a quarter of the terrorist actions.<sup>37</sup> It has been argued that “[f]or the religious terrorist, violence is a divine duty ... executed in direct response to some theological demand ... and justified by scripture.”<sup>38</sup> As Audrey Cronin points out, religious terrorists see their struggle as good against evil, therefore dehumanising their victims and considering non-members of their group to be infidels or apostates.<sup>39</sup> As a result indiscriminate violence may not be only morally acceptable, but amount to a righteous and necessary advancement of their religious cause. ‘Old terrorists’ tended to strike only selected targets, while ‘new’ terrorism has become increasingly indiscriminate and tries to produce as many casualties as possible.<sup>40</sup> Religious terrorists are often their own constituency, not concerned about alienating their supporters with their acts of destruction, and holding themselves accountable only to God.<sup>41</sup> For the similar reasons ‘new terrorists’ do not always claim and sometimes even deny responsibility for their actions. They see the action itself as important and not the claim to it.<sup>42</sup> They are not interested in any sort of negotiation. “*Today’s terrorists don’t want a seat at the table, they want to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it*”.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Walter Enders and Todd Sandler point out that ‘new terrorists’ are a lot more willing to engage in risky and more complex acts. Whereas most actions by ‘old terrorists’ involved an escape plan, ‘new terrorists’ seem more willing to give their own life while orchestrating a terrorist act. They believe that ‘new terrorists’ are more prepared to die because martyrdom is seen as a way of reaching heaven.<sup>44</sup>

The threat of mass destruction by terrorists is a fundamental part of the concept of ‘new terrorism’. Many theorists believe that due to their motivation to use extreme violence, ‘new terrorists’ are likely to try to obtain and use biological, chemical,

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<sup>37</sup> Bruce Hoffman, “‘Holy Terror’: The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 18, No. 4, (1995), pp. 271-284.

<sup>38</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Audrey K. Cronin, (2003) “Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism”, *International Security*, Vol. 27, No.3 (Winter 2002/2003), pp. 41.

<sup>40</sup> Laqueur, *No End To War*, op. cit., pp. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Hoffman, “‘Holy Terror’”, op. cit., pp. 273.

<sup>42</sup> Michael. Whine, “The New Terrorism”, (*International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism*, 20 January 2002), pp. 4, available at: <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articleid=427>.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew J. Morgan, “The Origin of the New Terrorism”, *Parameters*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, (2004), pp. 30-31.

radiological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction.<sup>45</sup> Hoffman warns that “*many of the constraints (both self-imposed and technical) which previously inhibited terrorist use of WMD are eroding.*”<sup>46</sup> With the collapse of the Soviet Union acquiring material which could be used for WMDs or even a complete WMD has become easier and does not need the co-operation of a state sponsor anymore.<sup>47</sup>

Another of the characteristics of ‘new’ terrorism is precisely this inherent lack of state backers. Some believe that the willingness to use extreme violence shows that new terrorists do not have an organisation or state sponsor to protect, so they see no reason to limit their violence as they do not fear a backlash.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the financing of ‘new terrorism’ is not based on money received from state sponsors, but on other illegal sources such as drug trafficking, video piracy and credit card fraud, as well as legal business investments, donations from wealthy individuals, charities and Diaspora.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to this the lack of state sponsorship ‘new terrorists’ are seen to be predominantly amateurs that operate on a part time basis and have not dropped out of society totally. The new amateur terrorists only come together to conduct their action and then disband. They predominantly not receive training or logistical support from state sponsors but rely on the network of supporters and information on the internet.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the increasing use of information and communication technologies enables the new terrorists to communicate covertly and to bridge distances more easily. Although new terrorists might be part time amateurs they show a higher degree of technological and operational competence. They use a vast range of

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<sup>44</sup> Enders & Sandler, “Is Transnational Terrorism Becoming More Threatening?”, op. cit., pp. 311.

<sup>45</sup> Jessica Stern, “Getting and Using the Weapons” in Russell D. Howard & Reid L. Slayer (eds.) *Terrorism and Counterterrorism – Understanding the New Security Environment*, (Guildford: McGraw-Hill, 2003), pp. 158-174.

<sup>46</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 197.

<sup>47</sup> For a more detailed look at terrorism and WMDs see: Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, and Bradley A. Thayer, *America's Achilles' heel: nuclear, biological, and chemical terrorism and covert attack*, (Cambridge: MIT, 1998) and Gurr & Cole, *The New Face of Terrorism*”, op. cit..

<sup>48</sup> David Tucker, “What’s New About the New Terrorism and How Dangerous Is It?”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (2001), pp. .

<sup>49</sup> Nimrod Raphaeli, “Financing of Terrorism: Sources, Methods, and Channels”, *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 15, No. 4, (2003), pp. 59-82.

<sup>50</sup> Yariv Tsfati & Gabriel Weimann, “www.terrorism.com: Terror on the Internet”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 25, No. 5, (2002), pp. 317-332.

communication equipment including mobile and satellite phones as well as email and web-sites to plan their next terrorist acts, communicate with other terrorist groups and spread their message around the world.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, 'new terrorism' also exploits the increase in intercontinental flight connections and the poor customs and immigration control in many countries to move around the world.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, one of the most emphasised aspects of 'new terrorism' is its loose networked and less hierarchical organisational structure. Some authors believe that the amateur terrorist is a manifestation of a new network structure that is facilitated by the emergence of new advanced telecommunications technology. Each group within this network becomes relatively autonomous but are still linked by advanced communication and their common purpose. They thereby become a lot more flexible and can adapt and react more easily to different situations. Although members do communicate with their leadership, groups can, to a certain extent, operate self-sufficiently.<sup>53</sup> Simon and Benjamin refer to this as a combination of "a 'hub and spoke' structure (where nodes communicate with the centre) with a 'wheel' structure (where nodes in the network communicate with each other without reference to the centre)."<sup>54</sup> John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt and Michele Zanini note that terrorist leadership is derived from a "set of principle [that] can set boundaries and provide guidelines for decisions and actions so that members do not have to resort to a hierarchy – 'they know what they have to do.'" The authors describe the organizational designs that may "sometimes appear acephalous (headless), and at the other times polycephalous (Hydra-headed)."<sup>55</sup> This type of integrated structure is a lot more difficult to identify and penetrate than a more traditional hierarchical structure. It is far more resilient because each cell can still operate even if they lose the leadership of the organisation.

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<sup>51</sup> Kevin A. O'Brien, "Information Age, Terrorism and Warfare", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol.14, No. 1, (2003), pp. 183-206.

<sup>52</sup> Wilkinson, "International Terrorism", op. cit., pp. 232.

<sup>53</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda. Global Network of Terror*, (London: Hurst, 2002), pp. 52-75

<sup>54</sup> Simon and Benjamin, "America and the New Terrorism", op. cit., pp. 70.

<sup>55</sup> John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt & Michele Zanini, "Networks, Netwar, and Information-Age Terrorism", in Lesser et al., *Countering the New Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 51.

To summarise, the proponents of 'new terrorism' believe that there is something inherently new about the terrorism of today. This includes a fanatical religious motivation, excessive indiscriminate violence together with the possible use of WMDs, an increasing independence from state sponsors as well as a new network structure helped by communications technology and new amateur terrorists who only come together in ad hoc groupings.

### **DOES THIS QUALIFY THE TERM 'NEW TERRORISM'?**

Several authors such as Thomas Copeland, Isabelle Duyvesteyn and David Tucker doubt the validity of the term 'new terrorism' and some make comparisons between recent terrorist events and antecedents in history. For example John Gray notes the similarities between today's terrorism perpetrated by al-Qaeda and Russian anarchist terrorists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>56</sup> Niall Ferguson also observes some of the resemblance of the two, including the political religion of their ideologies, the trans-national nature of both sets of terrorists who often lived and planned attacks abroad, as well as the similarity of political economic situation in the world at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. In connection with fundamentalist Islamic terrorism often associated with 'new terrorism', he even draws comparisons between the Sudanese revolt of the Mahdi against the British Empire in the 1880s and Osama bin Laden's fight against the United States.<sup>57</sup> Paul Kennedy also sees parallels and comments on the similarity between the hatred of London as the financial centre of world capitalism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the hatred of the Washington and the United States by 'new terrorists' today.<sup>58</sup>

Examining the individual characteristics of 'new terrorism' in more detail does throw up some questions about the validity of the concept. As mentioned above, proponents of the 'new terrorism' concept argue that the motivations of terrorists are changing and point to the growth of religious fundamentalism. Bruce Hoffman asserts that "*the*

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<sup>56</sup> John Gray, "Why Terrorism is Unbeatable", *New Statesman*, (February 25, 2002), pp. 50.

<sup>57</sup> Niall Ferguson, "Clashing Civilizations or Mad Mullahs: The United States between Formal and Informal Empire", in Strobe Talbott & Nayan Chanda (eds.), *The Age of Terror: America and the World after September 11*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. 115-141.

*religious imperative for terrorism is the most important characteristic of terrorist activity today.”*<sup>59</sup> But does the rise in religiously motivated terrorist groups legitimise the existence of the term ‘new terrorism’? Historically, religious terrorism is by no means a new phenomenon. David Rapoport points out that religiously motivated terrorism aimed at killing non-believers has existed for thousands of years. From the first century zealots to the thirteenth century assassins and even up to the nineteenth-century and the emergence of political motives such as national, anarchism and Marxism, “*religion provided the only acceptable justification for terror*”.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, this is not so much a new characteristic but more a cyclic return to earlier and maybe forgotten motivations for terrorism. Cronin suggests that “*the forces of history seem to be driving international terrorism back to a much earlier time, with echoes of the behavior of ‘sacred’ terrorists such as the Zealots-Sicarii clearly apparent in the terrorist activities of organizations such as al-Qaeda and its associated groups.*”<sup>61</sup> In addition to this point, one should note that many ‘old’ terrorist organisations also had close links with and were partly motivated by religion. The most prominent examples being the IRA with its predominantly catholic membership, the Protestant Ulster Freedom Fighters or Ulster Volunteer Force, the mainly Muslim FLN in Algeria, the Jewish terrorist group Irgun and the EOKA in Cyprus which was influenced partly by the Greek Orthodox Church.<sup>62</sup>

In connection to this it is important to recognise that although the actions of Islamist terrorist groups are religiously motivated they still have a certain political agenda. When examining the demands and goals of Al Qaeda’s or other ‘new terrorists’ associated with them, it becomes apparent that many of them represent clear political targets. For example, the spread of political Islam, the withdrawal of foreign influence from the holy lands, the overthrow of the existing governments in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the creation of a worldwide pan-Islamic Caliphate and the elimination of

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<sup>58</sup> Paul Kennedy, “Maintaining American Power”, in Talbott and Chanda, *The Age of Terror*, op. cit., pp. 56.

<sup>59</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 87.

<sup>60</sup> David C. Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, (1984), pp. 659.

<sup>61</sup> Cronin, “Behind the Curve”, op. cit., pp. 38.

<sup>62</sup> Bruce Hoffman, “Old Madness New Methods – Revival of Religious Terrorism Begg for Broader U. S. Policy”, *RAND Review*, ( Winter 1998-1999), pp. 13-14.

Israel.<sup>63</sup> In reality it is extremely hard if not impossible to distinguish between religious and political motivations. “*Were the Jewish terrorists in British Palestine fighting for religion or against colonialism? Do the Tamil Tigers want their own homeland because they are Hindus in a Muslim nation or because they are Tamils in a Sinhalese country?*”<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Chris Quillen points out that assigning religious motivations to individual terrorist attacks is subjective and open to interpretation. He cites the example of the Oklahoma City bombing which one might interpret as an act motivated by Timothy McVeigh’s devotion to the Christian Identity movement or as a reaction of a political terrorist against gun control measures and the bloody federal raids at Ruby Ridge and Waco.<sup>65</sup>

Supporters of the ‘new terrorism’ concept have argued that terrorists have become more lethal and willing to use unlimited force to cause large numbers of casualties indiscriminately. In their view, ‘traditional’ terrorists were more restrained in their use of violence and the number of dead they aimed to produce.<sup>66</sup> However, one could argue, that indiscriminate mass-casualty attacks have long been a characteristic of terrorism. Examples of ‘old terrorists’ causing many fatalities include the simultaneous truck bombings of US and French barracks in Lebanon in 1983, which killed a total of 367 people, the downing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, which took the life of 270, and the bombing of an Air India flight in 1985 by Sikh terrorists with 329 fatalities.<sup>67</sup> It is true that none of these can compare to the casualties caused by the 9/11 attacks, however, the term ‘new terrorism’ was issued long before 2001. Even if this was not the case and ‘new terrorism’ started with 9/11, one has to question the validity of the concept if one of its main characteristics is based on solely one terrorist attack. When examining the data on international terrorism incidences, one finds that although the number of terrorist incidences has generally declined from

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<sup>63</sup> Roland Jacquard, *Die Akte Osama Bin Laden*, (München: List Verlag, 2001), pp. 236-335.

<sup>64</sup> Chris Quillen, “A Historical Analysis of Mass Casualty Bombers”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 25, (September / October 2002), pp. 288.

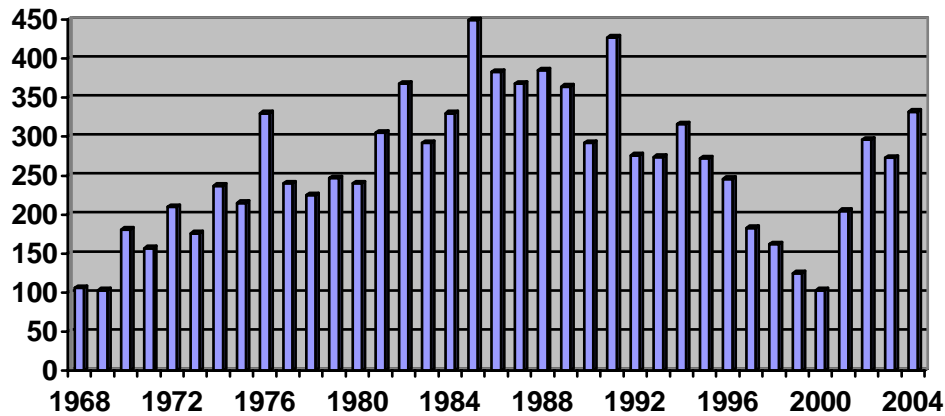
<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 287.

<sup>66</sup> Walter Laqueur, “Left, Right, and Beyond: The Changing Face of Terror” in James F. Hoge Jr. & Gideon Rose (eds.), *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), pp. 71-82.

<sup>67</sup> Lloyd Pettiford & David Harding, *Terrorism – The New World War*, (London: Arcturus Publishing, 2003), pp. 106-146.

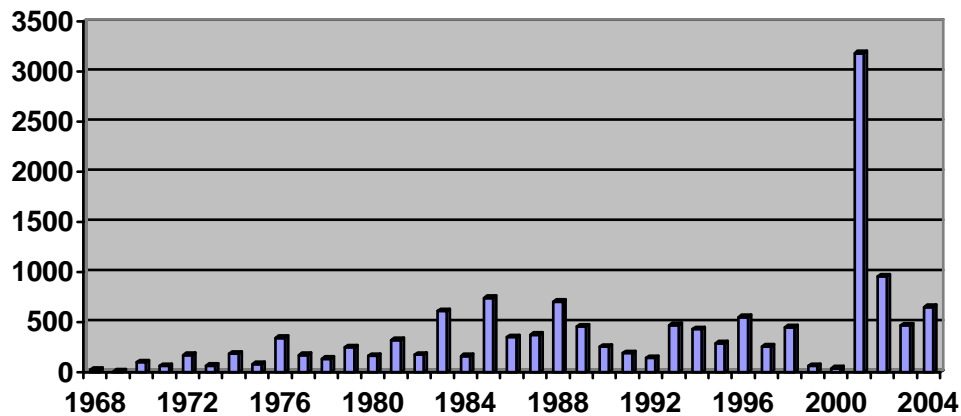
the mid 1980s, the number of fatalities per incident has increased since the 1980s.<sup>68</sup> Considering that 'new terrorism' supposed to have started in the 1990s, this increase of fatalities might not be directly linked to the phenomenon of 'new terrorism'.<sup>69</sup>

**Table 1.1: International Terrorist Incidences**



Source: RAND - St Andrew's Terrorism Chronology 1968-1997 & RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident database (1998-Present)

**Table 1.2: Fatalities in International Terrorist Incidences**



Source: RAND - St Andrew's Terrorism Chronology 1968-1997 & RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident database (1998-Present)

One might be able to argue that the increase of casualties is partly due to better technology. Explosives, timing and remote control devices have been substantially

<sup>68</sup> See table 1.4 & 1.5 in appendix B.

<sup>69</sup> Isabelle Duyvesteyn, "How New Is the New Terrorism?", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 5, (2004), pp. 447-448.



improved and must have an effect on the numbers of casualties.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, it is important to point out that governments have continuously adapted to terrorist techniques such as kidnapping, hostage taking, hijacking, assassinations and sabotage by providing security at airports, securing embassies, guarding likely kidnap targets, training specialist commando troops and sharing intelligence with other states. In response to this, terrorists have adjusted their methods since the 1980s by placing more emphasis on co-ordinated bombing and other hit and run tactics. While it is becoming increasingly difficult for terrorists to get close to their traditional targets they have to find other ways of capturing the media's attention. Using more spectacular co-ordinated violent tactics is one way of gaining greater media coverage.<sup>71</sup> Although many 'new terrorist' groups do not publish a communiqué following an attack claiming responsibilities and stating the reasons for the attack, 'new terrorists' are still interested in getting attention and acknowledgement of their cause. Some writers such as Thomas Copeland claim that "[t]hey do not need to make public statements taking credit for an attack because their constituency is already aware of the actors and their cause".<sup>72</sup> Although they may be targeted at an internal audience, many of the video and tape recordings of Osama bin Laden indicate his interest in remaining in the public eye.

Scholars such as Ray Takeyh argue that public opinion does still play a vital role in 'new terrorism'. An example can be seen in the Al-Jama Al-Islamiyya attack on the Temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor, which killed 58 tourists and four Egyptians in 1997. The attack was widely condemned not only by western governments but also by many radical Islamists, who saw the attack as damaging their cause. The author points out that the support for Al-Jama Al-Islamiyya fell dramatically in Egypt as a result of the attack. The group remained active but their attack had alienated the people they most wanted to draw and over time this gravely hindered their efforts.<sup>73</sup> This is particularly true when one considers the terrorists political agenda mentioned above. These

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<sup>70</sup> Enders and Sandler, "Is Transnational Terrorism Becoming More Threatening?", op. cit., pp. 311.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 174-186.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Copeland, "Is the New Terrorism Really New? An Analysis of the New Paradigm for Terrorism", *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, (2001), pp. 101.

<sup>73</sup> Ray Takeyh, "Islamism: R.I.P.", *The National Interest*, No. 63, (Spring 2001), pp. 97-102.

political goals, such as the establishment of an Islamic state, will restrain terrorists. They have to take into consideration that they need public support for the establishment of a new state, and therefore they have to be careful not to alienate their supporters and sympathisers by using excessive violence. Although they see their violence as legitimised by God they are still dependent on some public support for recruitment and finance.<sup>74</sup> The statement by Brian Jenkins that '*terrorism is theatre*'<sup>75</sup>, regarded by many proposing the concept of 'new terrorism' as outdated, still applies to some extent. It is hard to think of a more symbolic and dramatically theatrical attack than the attacks of 9/11. Targeting the World Trade Center, considered the symbol of western capitalism, the Pentagon, heart of US defence, as well as probably the White House seems too much even for a Hollywood film. Terrorists still want many people watching, and one has to realise that the larger, more co-ordinated and dramatic the attack, the larger the audience is going to be. Therefore, the increasing level of fatalities can be seen as an ongoing process, which does not necessarily represent a unique feature qualifying the concept of 'new terrorism'.<sup>76</sup>

Many have also argued that the proliferation of technology as well as the accessibility of information useful to terrorists on the internet, are dangerous new trends which have contributed to the emergence of 'new terrorism'.<sup>77</sup> However, the availability of information is arguably nothing new. Advice on bomb-making and terrorist tactics has been available in newsletters and handbooks since at least the turn of the century. One of the most famous being the Anarchist Cookbook published in the 1960s.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the possible use of WMDs as a characteristic of new terrorism is debatable. The example of the sarin gas attack on the underground in Tokyo by Aum Shinrikyo in 1995 is frequently used to make the connection between 'new terrorism' and WMDs. However, there is evidence that there have been plans and attempts by terrorists to use WMD for several decades. In 1972 members of a right-wing group called 'Order of the Rising Sun' were arrested and found to be in the

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<sup>74</sup> Tucker, "What's New About the New Terrorism", op. cit., pp. 6.

<sup>75</sup> Jenkins, "International Terrorism", op. cit., pp. 16.

<sup>76</sup> Herfried Münkler, *Die neuen Kriege*, (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Reinbek: Rowohlt Verlag, 2002), pp. 187.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "The Modern Terrorist Mindset: Tactics, Targets and Technologies", *Columbia International Affairs Online Working Paper*, (October 1997).

possession of 30 to 40 kilograms of epidemic typhus pathogens, with which they wanted to poison the water supply of Chicago, St. Louis and other cities in the Mid West in order to create a new master race. Furthermore, former members of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's group contaminated salad bars with *Salmonella typhi* and poisoned 750 people in Oregon in 1984. Another example in Europe includes the discovery of botulinal toxin and considerable quantities of organophosphorous compounds, used to make nerve gas, in safe houses in France and Germany belonging to the Red Army Fraction in the 1980s.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the PKK and the Tamil Tigers, both examples of 'old terrorists', supposed to have used chemical weapons. In 1992 the PKK poisoned water tanks of the Turkish air force near Istanbul with a lethal dose of cyanide, and in 1990 the Tamil Tigers attacked a Sri Lankan military camp with chlorine gas.<sup>80</sup> Hoffman, while referring to the RAND - St. Andrew's University Chronology of International Terrorism, notes that since 1968 sixty terrorist incidences involved plans or attempts to use WMDs.<sup>81</sup>

Apart from biological and chemical WMDs, the threat of nuclear terrorism has also been linked to the concept of 'new terrorism'. So far there have been no attacks with nuclear weapons by terrorists and the most devastating terrorist attacks have employed bombs, conventional explosives and most famously box cutters. Authors such as David Claridge argue that authorities have significantly inflated the threat of terrorists using WMDs to a hysterical level wasting huge amounts of resources.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, one should be aware of the danger of focusing on '*what-ifs*'. As Brian Jenkins points out:

*"The analysis of 'dream threats' is filled with pitfalls. It is easy to begin by identifying vulnerability...positing theoretical adversaries ... then reifying the*

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<sup>78</sup> John Gearson, "The Nature of Modern Terrorism", in Lawrence Freedman (ed.), *Superterrorism – Policy Responses*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), pp. 15.

<sup>79</sup> Wendy Barnaby, *Biowaffen – Die unsichtbare Gefahr*, (München: Wilhelm GoldmannVerlag, 2002), pp 58-59

<sup>80</sup> Gavin Cameron, "Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism Research: Past and Future", in Andrew Silke (ed.), *Research on Terrorism-Trends, Achievement and Failures*, (London: Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 81.

<sup>81</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 198.

<sup>82</sup> David Claridge, "Exploring the Myths of Superterrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 11, No. 4, (1999), pp. 144-148.

*threat – a subtle shift of verbs from could to may happen [...]. The danger arises when speculation becomes the basis for launching costly efforts to prevent 'what-ifs', or worse, when policymakers believe that highly publicized preventive or mitigation efforts will deter such adversaries.”*<sup>83</sup>

Yet, it should also be noted that although not the same as exploding a purpose built nuclear bomb, there have been numerous attacks on nuclear power stations in the 1970s and 1980s. One of the first occurred in 1973 when a commando from a left-wing Argentinean group entered the construction site of the Atucha atomic power station north of Buenos Aires. In 1976, bombs were thrown at an atomic power plant in Brittany, France, but the nuclear reactor was not damaged. During the following years ETA conducted several attacks against the Lemoniz nuclear power station near Bilbao in Spain. Other attacks were directed against plants near San Sebastian, Pamplona, Tafalla, Beriz and other sites in northern Spain. In 1982, the terrorist wing of the ANC sabotaged two South African nuclear power plants. Both their reactors were substantially damaged, but as they were not in operation at the time there was no release of radiation.<sup>84</sup> Although it was not proven whether these groups aimed at causing a nuclear explosion or contamination, these incidents show that even 'old terrorists' were willing to cross the nuclear line.

The same can be said about suicide terrorism, which is often included in the description of the fanatical nature of 'new terrorism' and frequently associated with Islamic fundamentalism. However, one should point out that suicide bombing has been used extensively by Hindu Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka from 1983 onwards. Yoram Schweitzer even points out that the Tamil Tigers since 1983 have engaged in more terrorist suicide attacks than all other terrorist organisations together (168 out of 270 from 1980 to 2000).<sup>85</sup> Even prior to this, the use of daggers at close range by the

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<sup>83</sup> Brian Jenkins, "Foreword" in Lesser et al., *Countering New Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. x.

<sup>84</sup> Laqueur, *The New Terrorism*, ob. cit., pp. 72.

<sup>85</sup> Yoram Schweitzer, "Suicide Terrorism: Development and Characteristics", *International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism*, (21 April 2000), available at: [www.ict.org.il/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=112](http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=112)

Assassins during the Middle Ages, showed “*a willingness to die in pursuit of their mission*”.<sup>86</sup>

One of the other arguments mentioned above is that ‘new terrorists’ have become independent non-state actors. Some argue that due to the opportunities of globalisation terrorists today have simply diversified their incomes.<sup>87</sup> Others believe that the example of Al-Qaeda obtaining bases, training camps and sanctuary in Afghanistan shows that state connections are still relevant.<sup>88</sup> Following the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, evidence of state sponsorship of terrorism is more difficult to find. However, apart from the famous ‘axis of evil’ identified by President Bush, some analysts remain convinced that there are clandestine links or acquaintances between terrorism and some states such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.<sup>89</sup> So far, proving or disproving these links remains difficult. Furthermore, the question of what constitutes state sponsorship continues unanswered. Assisting terrorists groups in the form of money, weapons, training or bases for operations seems to easily qualify as sponsoring terrorism. What if a state loses control of parts of its territory and does not have the necessary resources or the political strength in its own country to oppose terrorist activity in the region?

The new international or global characteristic of terrorism is also debatable. Although, there are clearly different types of international action and cooperation Albert J. Bergesen and Omar Lizardo highlight that “[w]hile the contemporary period is known as one of ‘international terrorism’, there are clear grounds for considering the anarchist period as one that also had international or global aspects in that terrorism appeared in different parts of the world and involved crossing national boundaries for many attacks.”<sup>90</sup> They point to a number of examples such as the assassination of

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<sup>86</sup> Gearson, “The Nature of Modern Terrorism”, op. cit., pp. 14.

<sup>87</sup> Copeland, “Is the New Terrorism Really New?” op. cit., pp. 99.

<sup>88</sup> Lawrence Freedman, “A New Type of War”, in Ken Booth & Tim Dunne, *World in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), pp. 38.

<sup>89</sup> Michael Strohl, “The Mystery of the New Global Terrorism: Old Myths, New Realities?” in Charles W. Kegley, Jr. (ed.), *The New Global Terrorism – Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003) pp. 89.

<sup>90</sup> Albert J. Bergesen and Omar Lizardo, “International Terrorism and the World-System”, *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 22, No.1, (2004), pp. 45.

the Spanish prime minister by the Italian Angiolillo in 1892, the fatal stabbing of Empress Elizabeth of Austria by the Italian Luigi Luccheni in 1898 and the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand by the Bosnian Serb Princip in 1914. Throughout history terrorists have received support from foreign rulers or wealthy individuals from other countries.<sup>91</sup>

It is well established that international cooperation existed between many of the 'traditional' or 'old terrorist' organisations such as the RAF, Red Brigades, Action Directe, PLO, PFLP and IRA. Although, this predominantly took the form of joint training or providing a safe-haven abroad, there are also examples of international cooperation in direct terrorist attacks. In 1977 a Palestinian group hijacked an airline, which landed in Somalia and made demands to the German government for the release of RAF comrades from German prison. In the subsequent storming of the plane by the GSG9 Special Forces several of the Palestinian hijackers were killed. Several German terrorists from the Red Army Faction, the Movement 2 June and the Revolutionary Cells took part in major Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) operations and operations masterminded by Carlos the Jackal (Ilich Ramirez Sanchez) on behalf of the PFLP. These attacks included the seizure of the OPEC headquarter in Vienna in 1975, the attempted bombing of an El-Al flight in Paris and the attempted hijacking of an El Al flight in Nairobi in January 1975, as well as the hijacking of an Air France flight to Uganda in June 1976.<sup>92</sup> Other examples of 'old terrorists' cooperating in direct actions include the Japanese Red Army (JRA), who in 1973, together with several Palestinians, hijacked a Japan Airlines flight from Amsterdam, and in 1974 blew up a Shell oilrig in Singapore jointly with PFLP members.<sup>93</sup> Although one might argue that this type of collaboration is not exactly the same kind of cooperation found in terrorism today, it does weaken the argument of a new international terrorism, as most literature proposing the term does not differentiate forms of international cooperation.

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<sup>91</sup> Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling", op. cit., pp. 668-672.

<sup>92</sup> Eli Karmon, "Deutsche Terroristen – haben sie sich mit den palästinensischen Terrororganisationen verbündet?", *Politische Studien*, No. 368, (November / December 1999), pp. 71-94.

<sup>93</sup> Harvey W. Kushner, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 191.

In connection to this, one of the main differences postulated by the proponents of 'new terrorism' between 'old' and 'new' terrorists is their form of organisation. Whereas traditional terrorism was organised along hierarchical lines with a clear command structure, 'new terrorism' is seen as a loose network, more weakly organised and without a strong command structure. However, the network structure seen in 'new terrorism' is not a new phenomenon in terrorism and even Hoffman admits that the newness of the loose network structure associated with 'new terrorism' is debatable. For example over a century ago the anarchist movement, responsible for a number of high profile attacks against heads of state and often referred to as Anarchist or Black International, active mainly in Russia and France, pursued a similar strategy of violence carried out by loosely networked, largely unconnected cells of like-minded radicals.<sup>94</sup> Different forms of network structures can be also seen in traditional terrorist organisations. For example, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) can be seen as an umbrella group where the dominant faction, Fatah, did not have a monopoly of power. The different factions within the PLO were fairly independent and had different policies and strategies.<sup>95</sup> At the same time one could consider Hezbollah as an umbrella organisation of radical Shiite groups, where the relationship among members is unpredictable and does not follow strict lines of control.<sup>96</sup> Again others point out that network structures also existed in left-wing revolutionary groups such as the RAF where second, third and fourth generation terrorists did not really form a hierarchical organisation but rather a network with similar common goals.<sup>97</sup>

In the same fashion as there are network structures in 'old terrorism', there are clear signs of hierarchical command structures in 'new terrorist' organisations such as Al Qaeda. They do possess a clear leadership, operative units conducting the attacks, as well as "*specialized units directly below the top leadership level*" who are responsible

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<sup>94</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "Change and Continuity in Terrorism", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 24, (2001), pp. 426.

<sup>95</sup> Helen Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation, People, Power and Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 140.

<sup>96</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, "Hizbullah's Command Leadership: Its Structures, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (1994), pp. 304.

<sup>97</sup> Tucker, "What's New About the New Terrorism", op. cit., pp. 4.

for issues such as recruitment, finances, procurement and public relations.<sup>98</sup> At the same time terrorist organisations have different types of members including core members or professional terrorists, part-time terrorists or amateurs, who also lead a normal life outside of the organisation, as well as less closely associated supporters. These different types of members exist in both 'old' and 'new terrorism' to a fluctuating degree.

## CONCLUSION

As we have seen, many different characteristics have been attributed to 'new terrorism'. It is said to be motivated by religious fanaticism, use extreme indiscriminate violence and possibly WMDs, be increasingly independent from state sponsors and organise itself in a network structure helped by communications technology and new amateur terrorists who only come together in ad hoc groupings. Many of these are valid assessments of contemporary terrorism. However most of them are not new.

To summarise the key arguments made in this paper one should note that fanatical religious terrorism has existed for thousands of years and that the distinction between religiously and politically motivated terrorism is predominantly artificial. The willingness of 'new terrorists' to use more indiscriminate violence is more a continuation of an existing trend than an all-new phenomenon. Terrorism is and always has been a violent business and the trend of increasing deaths per attack initiated in the 1980s, might be down to the need of keeping the media and the world's awareness focused on their grievances. Terrorism is still theatre, just on a much bigger stage, where an act has to be big and shocking to keep the audience's short attention from drifting to other scenes. State sponsorship or support is still part of terrorism today, although it might be less due to financial reasons, take a slightly different form and be less obvious. Terrorists still need a place where they can rest, plan, train and recruit members. Terrorists do not live in space, and although states

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<sup>98</sup> Renate Mayntz, "Organizational Forms of Terrorism – Hierarchy, Network, or a Type sui generis?", *MPIfG Discussion Paper 04/04*, (Cologne: Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Societies, 2004), pp. 11-12.



have refrained from openly supporting terrorism, many do not have the financial means or the internal political support to crack down on terrorists in areas where the government only has limited or no control. Finally the equation of 'old terrorism' = hierarchical structure and 'new terrorism' = network structure is false. Although networks have gained in prominence, hierarchical and network organisational structures are found in both 'old' and 'new terrorism'.

As mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this paper was not to claim that terrorism has not changed. Without doubt terrorism has evolved and changed over time. But so have many things. Without wanting to re-ignite the old debate about agency and structure, one should consider whether terrorism has changed or whether the world has changed in which it operates. Can we really expect terrorists to remain as they were in an isolated state of inertia, separated from the evolving world around them? Evolution does not justify the term 'new terrorism'. If this was the case we would have to call most things new every single day. One should also note that there is no one form of 'new terrorism', there is an evolution as well as a rise and fall of many different strands of existing terrorisms. There is not one 'new terrorism' and one 'old terrorism'. Authors have pointed this out in connection to 'old terrorism'. Laqueur argues that "[t]here *has been no "terrorism" per se, only different terrorisms*" (emphasis added).<sup>99</sup> So why does this not seem to apply to 'new terrorism'? It seems over simplistic to compartmentalise the terrorism perpetrated by the Aum Shinrikyo cult with the terrorism committed by Al Qaeda or Timothy McVeigh and call this 'new terrorism'.

As we have seen there are clear rational and pragmatic reasons for questioning a shift to the concept of 'new terrorism'. As the term has the potential of being misleading one should consider its abandonment. Maybe the term 'new terrorism' could be replaced by phrases such as 'terrorisms of today' or simply 'terrorisms', without referring to old, new, traditional or modern. Therefore, avoiding the creation of artificial distinctions, which ignore the evolutionary development of terrorism throughout history, as well as accepting that there are a variety of different forms of

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<sup>99</sup> Laqueur, *The New Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 79.

terrorism in the world at any one time. As a final thought, one should consider the connection between many of the characteristics of 'new terrorism' mentioned above and the current counter-terrorism measures implemented and planned since 9/11. Many of the policies can be directly attributed to some of the supposed features of 'new terrorism'. For example the invasion of Iraq, which was considered to have WMDs, can be interpreted as a counter-terrorism measure aimed at preventing 'new terrorists' from obtaining and using WMDs. More recently the shot-to-kill policy of the British police following the bombings in London was a clearly a counter-terrorist measure aimed at stopping suicide bombers. With 'new terrorism' being used to justify many new counter-terrorism measures, it is essential to research further the effectiveness and necessity of such measures in the light that the distinction between 'old' and 'new terrorism' has clearly been over done.

## APPENDIX A

**Table 1.3: Frequency of definitional elements in 109 definitions**

Elements	Frequency (%)
1. Violence, force	83.5
2. Political	65
3. Fear, terror emphasized	51
4. Threat	47
5. (Psych.) effects and (anticipated) reactions	41.5
6. Victim-target differentiation	37.5
7. Purposive, planned, systematic, organized crime	32
8. Method of combat, strategy, tactic	30.5
9. Extranormality, in breach of accepted rules, without humanitarian constraints	30
10. Coercion, extortion, induction of compliance	28
11. Publicity aspect	21.5
12. Arbitrariness; impersonal, random character; indiscrimination	21
13. Civilians, non-combatants, neutrals, outsiders as victims	17.5
14. Intimidation	17
15. Innocence of victims emphasized	15.5
16. Group, movement, organization as perpetrator	14
17. Symbolic aspects, demonstration to others	13.5
18. Incalculability, unpredictability, unexpectedness of occurrence of violence	9
19. Clandestine, covert nature	9
20. Repetitiveness; serial or campaign character violence	7
21. Criminal	6
22. Demand made on third parties	4

Source: Alex P. Schmid & Albert J. Jongman, (1988) *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature*, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, pp. 5.

**APPENDIX B:**

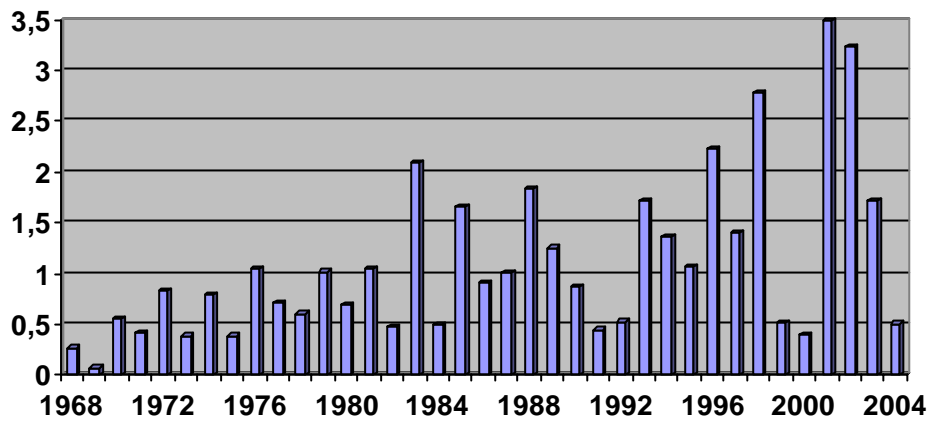
**Table 1.4: International Terrorism Data**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of International Terrorist Incidences</b>	<b>Number of Fatalities in International Terrorist Incidences</b>	<b>Number of Fatalities per Incident</b>
1968	106	29	0,273584906
1969	103	8	0,077669903
1970	181	101	0,55801105
1971	157	66	0,420382166
1972	210	174	0,828571429
1973	176	69	0,392045455
1974	237	187	0,789029536
1975	215	84	0,390697674
1976	330	345	1,045454545
1977	240	173	0,720833333
1978	225	137	0,608888889
1979	247	252	1,020242915
1980	240	167	0,695833333
1981	305	323	1,059016393
1982	368	177	0,480978261
1983	292	613	2,099315068
1984	330	163	0,493939394
1985	449	743	1,654788419
1986	383	351	0,916449086
1987	368	375	1,019021739
1988	385	706	1,833766234
1989	364	458	1,258241758
1990	292	257	0,880136986
1991	427	192	0,449648712
1992	276	146	0,528985507
1993	274	472	1,722627737
1994	316	433	1,370253165
1995	272	291	1,069852941
1996	246	551	2,239837398
1997	183	258	1,409836066
1998	162	451	2,783950617
1999	125	65	0,52

2000	103	41	0,398058252
2001	205	3185	15,52195
2002	296	959	3,239864865
2003	273	469	1,717948718
2004	332	653	0,508422665

Source: RAND - St Andrew's Terrorism Chronology 1968-1997 & RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident database (1998-Present)

**Table 1.5: Number of Fatalities per Incident<sup>100</sup>**



Source: RAND - St Andrew's Terrorism Chronology 1968-1997 & RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident database (1998-Present)

<sup>100</sup> In order to aid readability of the table, the figure for the year 2001 has been capped at 3,5 rather than displaying the real value of 15,52195 illustrated in table 1.4.

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