Abstract

This article analyzes the role of intelligence in the intricate fight against international terrorism at the beginning of the 21st century. First, it considers the main trends of terrorism in the decade of the 1990s, what were the changes in the mode of action by the various organizations and how the intelligence services dealt with these challenges. Then it evaluates the threats lying ahead in the future years and the technological and socio-economical developments influencing them, including the threat of terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction. Finally, it analyzes the implications of the September 11 attacks from the operational and intelligence point of view.

The work of intelligence against terrorism in the 21st century will be an arduous task, which will require a close look at new social and technological developments, an objective analysis of the new trends and threats, as well as much vision.

Intelligence is essential in countering terrorism, in diminishing its tactical effects and strategic importance. The US Congress Report of the National Commission on Terrorism stressed that “good intelligence is the best weapon against international terrorism.” But without a comprehensive, intelligent and firm policy of all the governments and political leaders involved, terrorism will continue to present a real threat to future generations.
Terrorism is finally coming to be recognized as a strategic threat to the internal stability and even survival of many countries—this in addition to its being a danger to the security of the international community, including the United States, the only remaining superpower on the global arena.

Former US President Ronald Reagan was probably the first international political leader to understand the strategic impact of terrorism. However, he saw it mainly in the framework of the Cold War between the two superpowers—a tool in the hands of the Soviet Union—rather than as a phenomenon per se. Upon his nomination, former US Secretary of Defense William Cohen declared that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism—such as chemical, biological and nuclear terrorism—would present the main strategic threat for the US in the 21st century. In Israel, where terrorism has been a continuous threat from the 1960s on, late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared for the first time in 1995 that terrorism is a strategic threat, though limited to the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. The subsequent events proved this statement tragically true, though proof was late in coming. Rabin himself was assassinated in November 1995 by a Jewish terrorist, while a series of Hamas suicide bombings in February and March 1996 led to a change of government in Israel.

It should be remarked that intelligence in the field of counter-terrorism is different, and in many aspects a more arduous task, than the classical intelligence, military and political, against enemy or rival states. The lives of many people are in continuous danger, often in real time during the work of the intelligence agencies; the rules of the game are cruel, for the personnel involved and for the terrorists themselves; the moral and ethical problems involved more intricate. But as in the case of military and political intelligence too, countries and security agencies have faced strategic surprises, the most prominent being the sarin gas attack in Tokyo in March 1995.

This article is based on a paper presented at the conference “Intelligence in the 21st Century,” at the Castle of San Marino, Priverno, Italy February 14-16, 2001, and it was updated to January 2002. A new section was added, analyzing the global consequences of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States.
Main Trends of Terrorism in the 1990s

In order to evaluate the threats posed by terrorism at the beginning of the 21st century, we will first sum up the main trends of the terrorism of the previous decade:

While the international terrorism of the second half of the 1990s has diminished in quantity of incidents, the quality of the attacks and their lethality has increased dramatically.\(^1\) Suicide and car bomb attacks are among the main methods used to achieve this goal—for example, the truck-bombs used in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salam against the American embassies in August 1998. Since then, we have witnessed a naval suicide bombing against the USS Cole in the harbor of Aden on October 12, 2000, and an attempt by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to carry out simultaneous attack with four suicide boats against the Sri Lankan navy, the same month. On the other hand, the hijacking of airplanes and the occupation of embassies have diminished, after having been the primary modus operandi of terrorist organizations in the 1970s and 1980s. This change is mainly due to the strict security measures taken by most countries to counter these terrorist methods.

Terrorism as a tool in political or ethnic conflicts has spread to new areas, mainly to Russia and the ex-Soviet republics and the states of the former Yugoslavia. In other areas such as Sri Lanka and Kashmir, its use has intensified.

The radical Islamist terrorism, which in many cases is a component of ethnic conflicts, has shifted from the Shi’a brand, developed under the influence of the Iranian Khomeinist revolution, to the Sunni model. The significance of this is in the fact that the Sunnis are in an overwhelming majority over Shi’as in the Muslim world. Thus, the threat from this kind of terrorism has grown, and we now see large countries such as India, China and Russia confronting it. For this reason also, the volume of

---

\(^1\) There were 273 international terrorist attacks during 1998, a drop from the 304 attacks recorded in 1997 and the lowest annual total since 1971. Yet, the total number of persons killed or wounded in terrorist attacks was the highest on record: 741 persons died, and 5,952 persons suffered injuries. See Patterns of Global Terrorism—1998, US State Department.
terrorism has sharply increased in many Arab and Muslim countries—Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and lately Indonesia—in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and in countries with Muslim minorities such as the Philippines. The third consequence of the Shi’á-to-Sunni shift is the appearance of international networks of Islamist terrorists, the most famous being Osama bin Laden’s al Qaida.

The first real non-conventional terrorist event, the sarin gas attack by the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo in March 1995 in the Tokyo subway, has broken the taboo in the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and this is a very significant event in the history of modern terrorism. It is possible that an odd event related to the Sydney Olympic Games, leaked to the media in August 2000, represents the crossing of another red line. This was the plan by Afghan immigrants in New Zealand to attack a research nuclear reactor near the Olympic capital. Had this attack actually been carried out, it would have been the first attack ever on a live reactor. However, it is also important to stress that until today no terrorist organization has followed the Aum Shinrikyo’s example.

The territorial United States has, for the first time, been the focus of major terrorist attacks, the bombings of the World Trade Center in New York in 1993 and the Oklahoma City Federal Building in 1994. It is also where a major right-wing attack took place, the bombing in Oklahoma. At the same time, Europe has seen only relatively minor incidents involving right-wing extremists.

The number of states sponsoring or supporting terrorism has diminished, as a result of the crumbling of the communist block and the firm stand of the US administration towards rogue states. Still, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and, to a lesser degree, Sudan, continue to present a threat to their regional neighbors and the international community. Lately, Pakistan and Afghanistan are emerging as new hotbeds of terrorism.

The radical ideological left-wing terrorism of the 1970s and 1980s has almost completely disappeared or has been eradicated in Western Europe and most of Latin America. In Latin America only Colombia and, to a lesser degree, Peru continue to grapple with significant leftist terrorism and guerrilla warfare.

While Latin America is fortunate in lacking ethnic strife, it has also developed a new kind of terrorism, narco-terrorism, which is only
superficially understood and researched.

However, as we see the emergence of new forms of terrorism, it is important to stress that we are also witnessing a counter-current. Important organizations are now turning to political means and negotiation as a means of achieving their strategic goals. This is true for the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, in the wake of the Good Friday agreement; the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) in Spain, which declared a unilateral cease-fire in September 1998 that lasted a year and a half; the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK) in Turkey; and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia. In addition, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in Algeria and the al-Jihad and Gam’at al-Islamiyya in Egypt have declared cease-fires. More recently, there has even been a proposal of a cease-fire by the LTTE in Sri Lanka. This trend is the result of the failure of the armed struggle to achieve the central strategic results expected by the organizations involved, and probably also the example they saw in the achievements of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) through the negotiations and the political process. But as in the case of the political process between Israel and the Palestinians, there are difficulties and crises in all the negotiating processes opened by these organizations. It is important to be attentive to this trend, to understand the motivations behind it and to learn the mechanisms that can be used on other fronts.

How have the intelligence agencies of the various countries involved, and the international intelligence community as a whole, coped with these events and trends of the 1990s?

If we take into consideration the number of very serious incidents that have occurred, we have an indication that despite all the efforts deployed by the security and intelligence services, they have failed to find answers to all the challenges posed by the new terrorist actors.

The identity of the perpetrators of some major terrorist attacks—such as the bombings of the Israeli embassy and the Jewish community building in Buenos Aires, in 1992 and 1994; or against the American military personnel at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in June 1996—is still unknown.2 Those responsible for the bombings of the American

---

embassy, the American Marines and French troops’ headquarters in Beirut in 1983 through 1984 are still unpunished.  

Major terrorist attacks have taken the intelligence agencies by surprise. This is true in particularly of those in the US, but also those in countries such as Egypt or Israel. The major strategic surprise, though, was the sarin gas attack in Tokyo. Although one might say, “the handwriting was on the wall,” little was done by the Japanese authorities to prevent it.

For the moment it seems that the various security services have not found the right operational response to suicide attacks. For instance, each time a warning is issued about a possible suicide attack against a US embassy the response is massive closure of US embassies around the world.

However, there were also major successes and breakthroughs. The US has invested a significant effort in identifying, tracking down and bringing to justice the perpetrators of terrorism against American citizens and interests. The identification and arrest of Ramzi Youssef, responsible for organizing the World Trade Center bombing, and other wanted terrorists for past or present activities, are witness to the American tenacity in using intelligence in the fight against terrorism. France has done the same with the famous Carlos, who was extradited from Sudan, while Germany has prosecuted some of the terrorists responsible for assassinations or hijackings in the 1970s and 1980s. Japan has made significant effort to bring to justice members of the Japanese Red Army who acted abroad, mainly in the Middle East, or who were liberated from jail following the hijacking of planes. More recently, the trial of the Libyan intelligence officers involved in the airplane bombing over Lockerbie has closed with the conviction of one of them by a

He said “elements of the Iranian government inspired, supported and supervised” members of Saudi Hizballah, the group thought to be primarily responsible for the tragedy. See AP, June 22, 2001.

3 Imad Mugniyah, a senior Hizballah operative, organized the April 18, 1983, bombing of the US Embassy in Beirut that killed 63 people. In October 1983, with Iranian and Syrian help, he plotted the twin suicide truck-bomb attacks in Beirut that took the lives of 242 US Marines and 58 French troops. He appears on the US updated list of wanted terrorists after the September 11 attacks. See http://www.fbi.gov/mostwanted/terrorists/fugitives.htm.
Many terrorist attacks have been prevented or foiled, but as is known, the successes of intelligence services generally are not published. In a known case, the swift FBI deployment after the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and its infiltration of the group involved, foiled a much greater plan to bomb the United Nations building and the Lincoln Tunnel in New York. It is a fact that bin Laden’s organization and his allies failed to carry out any serious attack since the bombings in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salam in August 1998. Most of the infrastructure of the al Qaida organization was uncovered in the weeks following the bombings, and new attempts at attacks in Jordan, Israel, Pakistan and even the United States have been foiled, leading to the arrest of many of the militants involved. It has yet to be proved that the USS Cole bombing was perpetrated by bin Laden’s network.

From the organizational point of view, the security and intelligence agencies have taken serious steps to improve their capabilities. The FBI has tripled its counter-terrorism force since the World Trade Center attack and the CIA has created its Counter-Terrorism Center (CTC) to deal with the threat at the highest civilian and military levels. The German authorities have greatly enhanced the police and security units dealing—successfully at that—with right-wing activities. Russia has formed new elite units in order to cope with the threat of terrorist attacks against its nuclear facilities, and so on.

International cooperation has improved, mainly on the bilateral level. Even the Israeli security services have been cooperating, with all the existing limitations, with the various Palestinian apparatuses until the latest intifada. The Arab League countries have arrived at an agreement to coordinate their intelligence and security activities against the radical Islamist movements, although they still consider Israel to be a legitimate target for the same movements. This agreement has led to arrests and extraditions to Egypt of important al-Jihad and Gama’a al-Islamiyya militants. Even Russia and, for the first time, China have united their efforts to fight Islamic radicals in Central Asia, in cooperation with the threatened countries of the region. In September 1999 they participated in the first meeting for coordination with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Russia has upgraded and enhanced its intelligence cooperation with the United States, Great
Britain, Turkey, and Israel, in the wake of the serious Chechen terrorist attacks in Moscow in the fall of 1999. India followed suit, following a wave of major terrorist attacks in Kashmir and the successful hijacking of an Indian plane by Kashmiri terrorists. A new European body, Europol, is also a step in the improvement of cooperation at the regional level.

Evaluation of Future Terrorist Threats

The question now is what lies ahead with regard to terrorist threats, and how the intelligence agencies should prepare in order to foil or at least minimize these threats. Following are the new trends in modern terrorism as seen by the author.¹

The estimation of most of the analysts, researchers, and of the main intelligence services, is that in the first decade of the 21st century terrorism will continue to be a serious threat on both strategic and tactical levels. This trend is aided by the growing instability of the international environment—on economic, social and political levels—and the difficulties in reaching a new power equilibrium in the international arena. Far-reaching technological changes, combined with millennium anxieties, will provide a fertile ground for the activities of both the old and the new kinds of organizations, such as the radical ecological or abortionist movements, and various esoteric cults and sects.

Ethnic conflicts, as those in the former Soviet Union—particularly the Caucasus—in Yugoslavia and in various parts of Africa, seem to be increasing, in spite of positive developments as witnessed by the peace agreement in Northern Ireland and the cessation of the armed struggle by the PKK in Turkey. The expansion of what some researchers call the “gray zones” such as Somalia and Congo, where there is no real presence of democratic countries or international agencies, transforms them into a kind of intelligence vacuum where terrorist organizations can find safe

haven and a basis for future activity.

The strategic assassination of important leaders during key political periods could continue, as has already happened in the case of Sadat in Egypt, Indhira and Rajib Gandhi in India, and Prime Minister Rabin in Israel. There have also been plots to kill the Pope, and attempts on the life of Egyptian President Mubarak.

The right-wing radicals will continue to develop the strategy of what they call “leaderless resistance,” whereas all militants and groups operate independently of each other, without reporting for instructions to a central headquarters or single leader. This strategy proved itself in the Oklahoma City bombing and could be adopted by new radical left-wing groups, as a consequence of an already developing discussion of the concept by such groups on the internet.

The anti-globalization movement will probably be one of the main fields of protest, focusing its efforts primarily against corporate power: large multi-national corporations accused of social injustice, unfair labor practices, difficult living and working conditions, as well as mismanagement of natural resources and ecological damage.\(^5\) Protest objectives extend also to multinational economic institutions, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank (WB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), seen as the spearheads of economic globalization and servants of corporate interests. The more militant and violent protesters belong to extremist elements associated with these causes, especially environmentalist, animal-rights, and anti-abortion activists. This represents a new breeding ground not only for radical anarchist and leftist terrorist groups, after a long period of obscurity, but also for radical right-wing, nationalistic and Islamist groups, which see globalization as a direct threat to the constituencies they profess to defend. The violence witnessed at Seattle, Melbourne, Prague, Davos and more recently in Genoa, Italy, could be a precursor of this new trend.

The internet and computer networks, not only as a propaganda tool, but also as a means of communication between members of terrorist organizations and between various organizations, will represent a major

---

challenge in the near future. The internet will increasingly be used for fundraising, financial transfers, and other organizational needs. Computers may also be used for waging cyber-attacks on essential civilian and military facilities of the “enemies” of the various organizations. So far, we have seen extensive “hacktivism,” the milder brand of computer attacks, in the Kosovo war, and more recently in the Middle East conflict, between Arab-Muslim and Israeli hackers. Cyber-terrorism is a new field of activity for terrorist groups and for individuals (such as the American Unabomber). The modus operandi of the terrorists will be completely different from past activities. The professional and intellectual qualities of the individuals involved will be more important than their physical preparation or personal courage, as the danger of discovery is more remote. The investment in human and material resources and time could be minimal. Even the average age of the individual terrorists may change, as young people are the most adapted to the new medium, as well as being the most idealistic.

**Weapons of Mass Destruction:**
**The Potential Threat from Terrorist Organizations**

Because of the potentially tremendous threat represented by WMD, as stressed during the last few years by the US administration, we will expand on this important subject and open with two methodological remarks: The first concerns the problem of definition. Today many authors and specialists—especially the Americans—use a variety of terms: mega-terrorism, super-terrorism, terrorism of WMD, and most recently, catastrophic terrorism. We prefer to use the classical term, “non-conventional terrorism,” which refers to the use, or the threat to use, of “non-conventional weapons” in terrorist attacks. By non-conventional, we mean chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological weapons or materials.

The second remark is more substantial, and concerns the outcome of non-conventional terrorist attacks. While most researchers consider such attacks to be mass-destruction attacks, we at the Interdisciplinary Center for Technological Analysis (ICT) distinguish between tactical, or limited, non-conventional terrorist attacks and strategic, or extreme, attacks. The
difference lies in the number of potential victims resulting from such an attack. Limited attacks can cause hundreds, perhaps even more victims, but only on a limited scale (for instance in a stadium, an embassy, a mall), and without the danger of contamination of the target site for a long period of time. In some senses, such an attack is within established terrorist doctrine.

The situation is different in the case of strategic WMD attacks. Only extreme non-conventional terrorist attacks could produce the destruction of a whole city, producing many thousands of victims and contaminating a large area for a long period of time. This would represent a significant departure from current thinking and an attempt to radically change the reality on the ground.

ICT participated in a two-year long interdisciplinary research, which showed that the developed, industrial world (US, Europe and Japan) was the main ground for non-conventional terrorism, the United States leading the targeted countries. This most likely means that the industrial and technological infrastructure is necessary for the development of a non-conventional capability by a terrorist organization. The facilities targeted (nuclear or chemical plants, military weapons, etc) are also usually found in these countries.6

In this sense, the US is not only, technologically the most advanced and developed country in the world, but also, ideologically, the superpower leader of the Western democratic camp during the Cold War and the only superpower left in the era of the New World [dis]Order. Therefore, the US was, and is, the main target for terrorist attacks, including non-conventional terrorism. This is also the reason the US administration considers WMD terrorism to be the main threat to its security in the 21st century.

The fact that very few incidents of this kind were registered in the Middle East and South America could imply that this kind of terrorism is less needed in areas where conventional terrorism is widespread.

It is evaluated that the known terrorist organizations do not have the

6 "Weapons of Mass Destruction—The Threat from Terrorist Organizations," several articles on the subject, in the framework of an international research project in the years 1998-99, by ICT Herzliya, The Interdisciplinary Center for Technological Analysis and Forecasting at Tel-Aviv University and the Fondation de la Recherche Strategique in Paris, unpublished.
The role of intelligence in counter-terrorism capability to build or acquire standard WMD. Even if they manage to produce and use simple, low-level non-conventional weapons, the number of victims will be limited: several dozens or hundreds, as was the case in the sarin attack by Aum Shinrikyo. In that incident, twelve people were killed and several thousands wounded, the majority lightly, despite the high level of technological capability of the perpetrating organization.\(^7\)

The ICT interdisciplinary research determined that chemical weapons are somewhat easier to develop than other non-conventional substances, while still presenting a significant challenge to most terrorist groups. On the other hand, biological weapons, while more difficult to manufacture, are potentially far more lethal, while nuclear weapons are beyond the capabilities of any terrorist group currently active. Moreover, while chemical weapons are easiest to develop, they are unlikely to be more effective in terrorist hands than are conventional high explosives.

This new view replaces exaggerated assessments of terrorist capability with a more realistic perspective. It does not, however, address the important case of a country’s providing chemical, biological or nuclear weapons to sponsored organizations. The threat of terrorists’ use of chemical and biological weapons is low, but some groups and individuals are beginning to show interest in these weapons, as shown by bin Laden’s interest in acquiring such capabilities. The threat of nuclear terrorism is even less certain, but there exists some degree of threat of low-grade attack, such as the one tried by the Chechen rebels in the forest surrounding Moscow using radiomaterials in March 1995.

As noted, we evaluate that the existent terrorist organizations and groups have the potential to perpetrate only limited attacks. They are also limited by moral and political constraints, and are also deterred by the fear of massive retaliation against the perpetrators and their constituencies. However, it must be stressed that the political and psychological consequences of such limited attacks will be enormous—

\(^7\) For an account of Aum Shinrikyo activities see D.W. Brackett, Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo (New York: 1996) and Richard Falkenrath, Robert Newman and Bradley Thayer, America’s Achilles’ Heel (Cambridge: 1998). Even in the case of the murderous attack by the Iraqi air force using standard chemical bombs against the Kurdish city of Halabja, the attack resulted in “only” 5,000 victims, from a population of 80,000.
and of strategic importance—for any country involved as well as for the international arena. If the suicide terrorist attacks in Israel in 1995 and 1996 had such a devastating effect on the political processes in the Middle East, imagine what would be the political and psychological consequences of even a very limited chemical or biological terrorist attack.

Tasks of the Security and Intelligence Services in Countering Future Terrorism

In light of the above threats and trends, what will be the task of the security and intelligence services, and how can they better cover the large array of terrorist groups and organizations? The threat of large-scale acts of terror and the potential of non-conventional terrorism will enhance the need to prevent terrorist schemes and give warning before such acts happen. In the case of chemical or nuclear terrorism without warning, even the first-responder teams could be destroyed before they act. In case of biological threat, the early warning could at least permit the immunization of the endangered population.

The existence of small groups and cells of highly motivated religious extremists, right-wing fanatics, unpredictable esoteric or millenarian cults, which in many senses act anarchically, means that the work of penetration and infiltration of these groups is highly difficult.

Thus, the use of human sources, or “humint,” should be expanded and perfected; the counter-terrorism expertise, the cultural knowledge and the language aptitudes of humint officers should be improved.

Penetration of composite, multi-national groups, like the ones formed by Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman in the US and Osama bin Laden, as well as cults, such as Aum Shinrikyo or Koresh, presents an especially formidable challenge. The inconclusive results of the US cruise missile strikes against bin Laden’s camps in Afghanistan are only a fresh example of the importance of good human sources in the heart of terrorist organizations.

As migration, illegal immigration and globalization become part and parcel of the international environment, leaders and militants of
terrorist organizations exhibit a tendency to transfer their activities, mainly logistics and funding, to the developed Western nations. From these countries, they coordinate terrorist or guerrilla activity against the regime against which they are fighting. For example, the Tamil LTTE has an extensive infrastructure abroad, as do the Islamist Egyptian, Saudi and Algerian “emirs.” It is therefore important to monitor the contacts between the “battle” areas and the countries serving as base for these activities, mainly Europe and North America.

It is important that intelligence services also cover the so-called gray zones and do not permit the formation of blind spots in the overall intelligence picture, such as Afghanistan and Somalia. Intelligence holes in such places would permit terrorist groups to find safe haven there, from which to develop and proliferate to the outside world.

Open sources are important in providing context, as well as warnings. Terrorist organizations have ideological programs, and they need to explain to their sympathizers and the public at large their goals and targets. In the age of the internet and open media, there is a need for careful examination and analysis of all their available materials. Often, intelligence agencies dealing with terrorism neglect the importance of this kind of information. It is perhaps the duty of academia and university researchers to deal with and to advance the knowledge of terrorist ideologies, doctrines and strategies.

The internet will increasingly become the place where the virtual clandestine activity takes place. For instance, a radical right-wing group, the Thule Netz in Germany, uses sophisticated ciphering and has many levels of encoding before reaching the highest echelons of their network. The Islamist groups use the net for funding, recruiting, as well as passing operational information and orders. One of the problems with which the security services will have to deal will be the encoding of communications between militants of terrorist cells and groups. The US administration has not succeeded in preventing the proliferation to clandestine organizations the PGP system of encryption. In this field it is important to invest technological efforts, to develop cooperation with the private sector and to enhance the cooperation between the technologically advanced countries. As for cyber-terrorism, a completely new approach is needed from the security and intelligence services, as well as the development of new doctrines.
As regards the proliferation of non-conventional weapons, particularly to the extent that it may touch terrorism and affect the security of whole countries, the next decade will certainly present the intelligence agencies with the most formidable task. The challenge in this case is two-fold: on the one hand the necessity of penetrating and monitoring the activities of the various groups and organizations in their attempts to acquire or use these weapons. On the other hand, there is a need to identify, monitor and neutralize the providers of raw materials, technology and know-how used in the preparation of such weapons. This mission is linked to the overall task of preventing the proliferation of WMD to rogue states, but in many senses is more intricate.

In the fields of structure, organization and coordination of intelligence and security agencies in those countries threatened by terrorism, there is much that needs improving and modernizing. The fight against terrorism will require higher national priorities, more human and financial resources, and better-trained and more cosmopolitan personnel, all of which may be at the expense of the more conventional military tasks.

The vast amount of material that modern means of communication put in the hands of the terrorist organizations will require that security services process digital information—often in a wide variety of languages and sometimes in real time or very short time. For example, the Chechen militants use some six websites in fifteen languages; while the Turkish authorities, during the pursuit of Turkish Hizbullah militants last year, found a number of computers and CD-ROMs containing the names of tens of thousands of activists or sympathizers. This implies the need to train and maintain an important pool of capable and highly professional intelligence officers.

In many Western countries, the law enforcement community is neither fully exploiting the growing amount of information collected in the course of terrorism investigations, nor distributing that information effectively to analysts and policymakers. Law enforcement agencies are traditionally reluctant to share information outside of their circles, so as not to jeopardize any potential prosecution. In some countries laws limit the sharing of law enforcement information, such as grand jury or criminal wiretap information, with the intelligence community. It is therefore necessary, within each country’s legal and constitutional
limitations, to adapt laws and procedures to the special task of fighting terrorism.

The trend of globalization, the internationalization of terrorist networks, and the existence of sponsor states or extraterritorial safe havens, could necessitate the intervention of military special forces, including the United Nations, NATO or European military units, as in Kosovo, the Middle East or Africa. These forces will need more intelligence concerning terrorist or guerrilla forces and activities. They will have to adapt to the new missions, developing their own intelligence capabilities and improve the coordination with the civil law enforcement agencies involved in the every day fight against terrorism.

The last field that must be addressed in the fight against terrorism is that of international cooperation. It is an accepted axiom today that cooperation on the bilateral, regional and international levels is essential in preventing and neutralizing not only international terrorism, but also internal terrorism in many countries. Terrorism in Algeria and Egypt or in Sri Lanka and the Philippines is closely connected with the activity of exiled militants in other countries, and the raising of funds by expatriate humanitarian organizations. Without sincere and close cooperation among the various countries in the intelligence field, each country, as past experience has shown, will at one time become a victim of terrorism. A very interesting and important development has been the creation of the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations, in the framework of the Center for International Crime Prevention. There have also been initiatives on the part of countries such as France and Russia to improve the international legislation at the United Nations concerning the financing of terrorism or the prevention of nuclear terrorism.

Nevertheless it must be clear that the activity of the intelligence agencies and international cooperation will be affected and influenced by the international environment, by new international laws and by human rights requirements. It will depend on the political limitations of the various countries with regard to the definition of terrorism, the threat of enlargement of conflicts to other countries, and the fear of creating additional innocent victims.
The Implications of the September 11 Attacks

Although the US administration feared a major terrorist attack against American targets during the year 2001 by the network of Osama bin Laden and his allies in the Islamist camp, the strikes against the World Trade Center towers in New York and the Pentagon building in Washington (and possibly the intent to attack the White House or the Capitol)—symbols of American political, economic and military power—surprised the US authorities:

• The expectations were of attacks against American targets abroad and not against the heart of US territory.

• This was indeed a unique terrorist operation: simultaneous hijackings of four planes, the use of trained pilots to arrive at the chosen target, multiple teams of suicide terrorists ready to act in concert and sacrifice their lives (although if looked at more closely, the various elements of this complex, precise and coordinated attack seem quite familiar to the terrorism specialist and have been already applied or planned in the past, albeit disjointedly). 8

---

8 A coordinated hijacking of four planes had already taken place. In September 1970, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine diverted a Pan-Am airliner to Cairo while three others—TWA, Swisair, and BOAC planes—were diverted to Dawson Airport in Jordan. All were blown up on the ground.

Based on intelligence, the hijacking of a plane in order to crash it in a populated area has been feared in Israel since the mid-1970s. On May 24, 2001, a small Lebanese civilian plane was shot down north of Tel Aviv by Apache attack helicopters because it was feared to be part of a Hizballah suicide operation. In December 1994 an Air France Airbus was hijacked by Algerian GIA terrorists, landed in Marseille for refueling and was stormed by French counter-terrorist teams when it became clear that they were planning a suicide mission over Paris. The leading “specialists” in the use of suicide operations as a strategic weapon are the Tamil Tigers of the LTTE, who operate against the Sri Lankan government. Their Black Tigers battalion, with hundreds of volunteers, used suicide operations to kill President Premadassa of Sri Lanka, injured two prime ministers, and killed several ministers and numerous high-ranking army officers. Moreover, the LTTE specializes in multiple coordinated attacks, using as many as eight suicide militants in the destruction of Colombo’s World Trade Center in December 1997 (in the Sri Lankan capital, not in New York!). They used four suicide speed boats to attack the Sri Lanka’s main navy base, just two
The security systems of the US aviation infrastructure (airports, planes, training, personnel), proved to be completely inadequate to the necessities of a superpower confronted with a continuous and relentless anti-American terrorist offensive.

The subsequent anthrax campaign by simple letters mailed through the federal postal structure also proved the unpreparedness of the concerned authorities, considering that the country has invested a large amount of money and technological effort in preparing itself for WMD attacks since the mid-1990s.

The anthrax attacks also point, according to the last official estimations, to the potential threat of domestic radical elements which could be involved in this plot, allied, at least objectively, to the external enemies of the nation.

The United States has considered the attacks as a declaration of war against the nation, comparable or even worse than the Pearl Harbor Japanese attack in WWII. Therefore, it has declared a War on Terrorism, without defining clearly all its goals and stages, but asserting that it will be a long, complex and arduous campaign. In order to wage this global war against terrorist networks and the states supporting and sponsoring them, the US has formed a coalition comprising most of the European states, Pakistan, Russia, Muslim countries in Central Asia, Turkey, India and others.

The first stage in the war on terrorism has been to destroy the Taliban regime and the al Qaida infrastructure in Afghanistan. This goal has been largely and, surprisingly, quickly achieved, although the arrest or killing of Osama bin Laden and his main deputies and Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, has yet not been attained. It is clear that the US will continue relentlessly the pursuit of these leaders and of the remnants of the huge Islamist networks connected with al Qaida.

The next months will witness the continuation of the war, mainly against the states that harbor Islamist terrorist networks or cells, such as Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Syria and Lebanon, as well as Iraq and Iran, two states that present an enhanced strategic threat because of their efforts to weeks after the suicide attack by terrorists from (presumably) bin Laden's organization on the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen.
achieve nuclear capability, besides the existing chemical and biological weapons they already possess. The war will include also the fight against Islamist terrorists and guerrillas such as in the Philippines, Indonesia, Chechnya, Kashmir, and other places.

The war will be waged on different, parallel levels: diplomatic, economic, financial, political and also military moves or strikes, depending on the conditions and the necessities of the moment or the arena involved. One of the main problems facing the planners of this war is the sensitivity of Muslim and Arab countries, which could be threatened by internal instability and turmoil as a result of the concentrated effort against the Islamist radicals. Countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia will find it difficult not only to participate in this campaign, but even to support it verbally.

Therefore, it can be evaluated that in the near future we will witness attempts by the remnants of the al Qaida networks to avenge the Afghanistan debacle and strike at US, Western and other coalition targets and assets. The opening of new fronts by the coalition against Somalia, Hizballah or Iraq, will provoke the appearance of new radical elements ready to strike back and try to stop or retaliate against what they will consider the “aggressors.”

In light of the “high standards” and challenges put forward by the September 11 terrorists, it can be evaluated that the future attacks could attempt to reach the same operational and destructive level or even to surpass it. In this sense, the main targets could be:

- Civilian chemical or nuclear facilities (one of the most frightening scenarios)

- Aviation infrastructures and civil planes (the planes becoming themselves a weapon in the hands of terrorists, as demonstrated by the September 11 attacks and Richard Reid’s attempt to blow up an American Airlines plane in the air)

- Governmental buildings and embassies (several plans to bomb American embassies have been foiled lately in Europe and Singapore; see also the suicide attack on the Indian Parliament)

- High buildings and public places such as stadiums or malls
• Military facilities and targets (like the suicide bombing against the USS Cole)

• The sarin attack in Tokyo and the recent anthrax campaign prove that low-level chemical, biological or radiological attacks could also be waged against some of the above targets, although as already proved by the last events the limited physical damage will be greatly enhanced by their psychological, moral and political effects.

Conclusion

The September 11 attacks confirmed the evaluation presented at the beginning of 2001 that terrorist organizations, and mainly the radical Islamist ones, would continue to strike with extreme conventional means at US, Western and other targets and will try to escalate their assaults, although the exceptional al Qaida operation surprised even the more pessimistic observers.

The subsequent anthrax campaign also confirmed the expectations for a limited low-level biological or chemical attack, but with huge psychological, moral and socio-economical consequences.

The next months and years will see the continuation of the campaign against terrorism and its state supporters on a global level, accompanied by internal and regional instability in the Middle East, Central and Southeast Asia with possible direct implications on the Muslim communities in the Western world.

International terrorism, mainly by Islamist radicals, will continue to present a serious tactical and strategic threat to the US, the Western democratic world and countries with large concentrations of Muslim communities or confronting ethnic and religious conflicts with Muslim populations. The terrorist attacks will try to achieve mass destruction and casualties and there is the potential for limited use of WMD.

It is possible that some local conflicts outside the Muslim world, such as those in Northern Ireland, Spain, Colombia, Peru, will be more easily solved on the background of the ongoing campaign against terrorism, as it appeared from the agreement of the IRA to decommission its weapons or the FARC acceptance of a government ultimatum to
retreat form occupied zones in Colombia and to restart the peace negotiations.

The last months have again demonstrated the unique importance of good inside intelligence on all levels—tactical, operational and strategic—based on all possible sources. They have also brought forth the absolute necessity of close international cooperation in the fight against the single terrorist individual or cell and against the military infrastructure of states sponsoring international terrorism.

To sum up, the work of intelligence against terrorism in the 21st century will be an arduous task, which will require a close look at new social and technological developments, an objective analysis of the new trends and threats, as well as much vision.

Intelligence is essential in countering terrorism, in diminishing its tactical effects and strategic importance. The US Congress Report of the National Commission on Terrorism stressed that “good intelligence is the best weapon against international terrorism.” But without a comprehensive, intelligent and firm policy of all the governments and political leaders involved, terrorism will continue to present a real threat to future generations.

---