

PERSPECTIVES ON TERRORISM

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Russia's Counterterrorism Policy: Variations on an Imperial Theme

By Mariya Y. Omelicheva

For over a decade, Russia has struggled with persistent domestic insurgency and terrorism. The country has experienced a multitude of terrorist and militant attacks, and the turn of the century was marked by a series of high-profile terrorist incidents involving a large number of civilian casualties. In response to this threat, Russian authorities adopted extensive counterterrorism legislation, established and modified institutions responsible for combating terrorism, and streamlined the leadership and conduct of counterterrorist operations. According to recent statements by the present Kremlin administration, the terrorist problem in Russia has finally receded, and the war on separatism had been definitively won. Yet, the daily reports on the shoot-outs and clashes between insurgents and Russia's security forces cast serious doubts on these official claims. Despite the signs of a slow normalization of life in Chechnya, the security situation remains tense there, and terrorist incidents and guerilla attacks have spread into the broader Southern region previously unaffected by terrorism.

Much ink has been spilled criticizing deficiencies of Russia's forceful, excessive, and poorly-coordinated responses. The state has been blamed for the lack of a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy encompassing socio-economic approaches and an effective system of prevention and protection from terrorism. Yet, judging the Russian campaign's excesses and failures does not improve our general understanding of why it has always favored the tactic of force and suppression as the most appropriate methods of fighting terrorism. Stressing the futility of a short-term reactive approach does not explain Russia's choice of the military approach over the long-term socio-economic solutions for resolving complex security concerns.

It is my conviction that many aspects of Russia's counterterrorism policy can be explained from the position of Russia's imperial tradition. The latter had considerable impact on the policies and security measures adopted by the Tsarist and Soviet regimes. Rekindled recently by the fear of disintegration and reduced international standing, it has been shaping security policies and perceptions of the modern Russian state. In the essay that follows, I briefly delineate the contours of Russia's contemporary counterterrorism policy and demonstrate the continuity of Russian counterterrorism from pre-Soviet and Soviet, to post-Soviet regimes. Next, I define and demonstrate the endurance of the imperial tradition throughout the Tsarist, Soviet, and modern epochs, and apply the "imperial lens" for the analysis and interpretation of Russia's measures aimed at combating terrorism.

A Brief on Russia's Counterterrorism Policy

In the context of Russia, terrorism has been tightly associated with activities of Islamic militants in Chechnya and the broader North Caucasus region. The latter has been an area with the highest concentration of terrorist attacks, and Chechen guerilla fighters have been implicated in the vast majority of hostage-taking incidents and terrorist crimes in Russia. The development of Russia's counterterrorism legislation and institutional framework has trailed the government's experiences with fighting the Chechen resistance and coping with the

threat of terrorism in the North Caucasus.

As a result of the developments in Chechnya, the Russian government adopted the Federal Law “On Combating Terrorism” in 1998, which became the main legal pillar of Russian anti-terrorist efforts. The law attempted to define terrorist activity omitting political motivation as one of the defining characteristics of the crime. It also sketched out the legal regime of the counterterrorist operation, and defined organizational basis of counterterrorism placing Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), and the Ministry of Interior (MVD) at the top of the list of agencies responsible for combating terrorism.

The troops of the FSB, MVD, and military units from other “power” ministries - the Defense Ministry, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and the Border Service – were used in counterterrorism and “mop-up” operations in Chechnya as part of the Combined Group of Forces. To assist the military battalions in carrying out counterterrorism tasks, the FSB, the Interior Ministry, and the Main Intelligence Service of Russia created special task teams for the liquidation of terrorists and militants without trial.[1] With a lack of oversight and the virtual impunity of the military and special task forces, the counterterrorism operation in Chechnya has degenerated into the indiscriminate use of overwhelming military force, characterized by deplorable patterns of brutalizing the local population. Frequent abductions, summary executions, and torture have had a radicalizing effect on the population.

In 1999, Russia entered the second Chechen military campaign, and a new wave of terrorist violence and insurgency engulfed the country in the early 2000s. The government’s reaction to a new wave of terrorism was similar to earlier policy responses. President Putin pledged to overhaul the system of Russia’s security services and develop procedures for coordinating the activities of counterterrorism agencies. The Russian government vowed to re-assert its influence in the North Caucasus and restore order in the volatile Southern region. The military strategies were expanded outside of the Chechen republic, and the presence of military troops in the rest of the North Caucasus was substantially increased.[2] Under the pretext of combating terrorism, the Kremlin increased the powers of its security services, strengthened the “power vertical,” and expanded controls over mass media and political life.[3] To streamline the changes in the leadership and conduct of counterterrorist operations, the Russian government adopted a new Federal Law “On Counteraction to Terrorism”, which replaced the earlier version. Entered into force in 2006, the law legalizes the application of armed forces for counterterrorism operations inside and outside of the country, but provides only scant description of prophylactic measures aimed at defending the Russian people and infrastructure against the threat of terrorism. As the 1998 act “On Combating Terrorism,” the 2006 counterterrorism law allows for suspension of certain individual liberties and media freedoms in the zone of counterterrorist operations, and authorizes counterterrorism units to carry out searches and demolition of suspicious airplanes and ships.

Extensive legislative measures and institutional reforms all point to the Russian desire to learn from its experiences of managing horrific acts of terrorism. Notwithstanding the changes at the tactical level of counterterrorist operations and development of new means for combating terrorism, the basic principles of tackling security threats in Russia have remained essentially the same. The striking similarities of the current views on the most effective and appropriate ways of combating terrorism to those of the Soviet and Tsarist regimes suggest the palpable continuity of Russian counterterrorism. The resemblance of contemporary measures to Soviet and pre-Soviet responses is indicative of an age-old understanding of the

terrorist threat that Russia inherited from the previous regimes.

The Continuity of Russia's Counterterrorism

Since the first terrorist campaign set up by the Russian revolutionaries in the late 19th century, terrorism in Russia has been regarded as an assault against the state personified by the Tsar, the communist party, or the central government and leadership of the modern state, respectively. In the epoch of Tsars, terrorism was coterminous with the revolutionary movement against absolutism.[4] During the early years of the Bolshevik rule, it was tantamount to counter-revolutionary anti-Communist actions. Two decades later, terrorism was viewed as subversive activities of foreign intelligence services, or acts of resistance to the Soviet government orchestrated by secret services from Western states. Neither the Soviet Union nor contemporary Russia has clearly defined terrorism or distinguished it from other crimes of a violent or political nature.[5] This ill-defined legal construct allowed the government full discretion to bring forth charges of alleged terrorist crimes. The vague definitions created uncertainty in the application of law, which allowed for politically motivated enforcement of the criminal legislative provisions.

The scope of Russia's counterterrorism measures has been traditionally confined to military operations and security services' efforts. This follows from Russia's understanding of terrorism as an attack on the state rather than an assault on individual rights. Subsequently, in Russia, concerns over human rights have always receded to the background of counterterrorism planning and operations. The very first counterterrorist campaign launched by the Tsarist regime was exemplar in this regard. The extent of oppression and violations of individual freedoms was incommensurable to the revolutionaries' attacks that the Tsarist government sought to deter and combat. Hundreds of "politically untrustworthy" people were sent to exile, placed under strict surveillance, or kept in the long-term pre-trial detention for having "intent" to commit terrorist crimes. The secret police monitored societal "moods," and exercised control over the theater, literature, and print media. It was also responsible for surveillance of intelligentsia in Tsarist Russia.[6]

The Bolsheviks, who replaced Tsarist agents, employed terror tactics to counter bourgeois terrorism. Since the latter was viewed as a bi-product of class struggle, the annihilation of the bourgeoisie was deemed essential for eradicating terrorism.[7] For the Soviet government, terrorism became a continuation of struggle launched by the capitalist governments against the communist regime. Subsequently, neutralization of "enemies" suspected in collaboration with the Western nations was considered a necessary dimension of counteraction to terrorism. In modern Russia, the ruthlessness of the Russian security forces and impunity with which its troops committed their crimes against ethnic Chechens were tantamount to the brutal practices employed against the peoples of the Russian Empire, whether under Tsarist or Soviet rule.

The "security departments" ["okhrannye otdeleniya," known in the West as Okhrana) that carried out counter-revolutionary and counterterrorism functions in the Tsarist administration became a prototype for the Soviet-era secret police. The "All-Russian Emergency Commission" ("Vserossiiskaya Chrezvychainaya Komissiya"), or VChK, became the main tool of the Bolshevik terror and a precursor of the Committee of State Security (KGB) created in 1954.[8] Modern Russia has largely inherited the Soviet-era structure of counterterrorism institutions, and the FSB's anti-terrorism office was a direct successor of the KGB's depart-

ment for the fight against terrorism. Many officers of the contemporary security organs continue to rely on Soviet-style work methods, and believe in the effectiveness of a security model emphasizing short-term, reactive, and coercive responses instead of exploring alternative long-term measures for preventing the threat of terrorism. A long-term strategy integrating preventive, prophylactic and reactive measures had not been developed in the Soviet Union and is in a rudimentary stage in Russia. In 2006, the FSB chief, Nicholai Patrushev, evaluated Russia's system of terrorist attack prevention as very poor, giving it a score of "2" on a 5-point scale, which is a failing grade in the Russian educational system.

The reason for this lack of a comprehensive preventive strategy is that in each regime neither the secret services nor the law-enforcement agencies of Russia have systematically examined their counterterrorism experiences for preparing recommendations regarding improvements of methods and tactics of combating terrorism.[9] The Russian security agencies, like their Tsarist and Soviet counterparts, carry out little analytical work and have a minimal understanding of complex scientific and methodological tools for the systematic processing and evaluation of data with the purpose of assessing strategic situations in the region, identifying patterns of crimes, as well as the causes and consequences of criminalization.

Russia's Imperial Tradition and Its Impact on State's Responses to Terrorism

It is my conviction that the continuity of the Russian counterterrorism program can be explained from the position of Russia's imperial tradition. The latter refers to a practice of extension and retention of the state authority over culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse populations by means of force and accompanying this practice with a set of beliefs regarding the greatness and inviolability of the empire.

Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union were both imperial states formed by conquest and military force, retained by power and centralized control, and ruled by a Moscow-based bureaucracy. Geographical expansion was the essence of imperial existence in the epoch of the Tsars. In the Soviet time, territorial aggrandizement became commensurate with the extension of the Soviet Union's national power. [10] Both the USSR and its predecessor were multi-national states in which ethnic cultures and indigenous traditions were subordinated to "high" Russian culture and language. Although, neither entity had succeeded in building a nation, both undertook measures to develop a sense of "Russianness" in the diverse population. The Russian settlers colonized the vast territories inhabited by the non-Slavs, and occupied the key military, security, political, and economic posts in the non-Russian regions. Russian language and traditions were imposed on other ethnic groups, and myths about Russia's leading role in their present and past were actively disseminated.[11]

Contemporary Russia has all of the trappings of an imperial state. It encompasses most of the territory of Soviet and Tsarist Russia, and many regions located on its territorial fringes still bear the scars of the colonial past. In this multi-ethnic state, a predominantly Slavic political elite rule over a multitude of disempowered ethnic cultures and groups.[12] The Russian government, elite, and general public perceive their country as the successor of both the USSR and the Russian empire. Vladimir Putin, upon assuming his post as a Russian president, attempted to build a historical bridge from the present to the past including the Soviet time. The ideas of Russia's greatness and its destined superpower status have been used as a centerpiece of the seemingly continuous Russian identity.[13] The notions of "gosudarstvennost'" and "derzhava," associated with strong statehood and great power, have

firmly entered public discourse and have become a staple of the ruling United Russia party's platform.

Thus, the history of Russia has been that of an imperial state. Yet, it has also been an empire with a different tradition. It has never evolved into a national empire with a strong sense of national consciousness. On the contrary, Russia's nationhood has always been bound with imperium, Tsarist or Soviet, and citizens -- regardless of their nationality -- owed allegiance to the Tsar, the Communist party, or the state.[14] Contemporary Russia reveres this tradition. "For the Russian, a strong state is not an anomaly, not something with which he has to struggle, but, on the contrary, a source and a guarantee of order, as well as the initiator and main moving force of any change," declared Putin.[15] A strong state with direct and decisive command over the people has been viewed as a key to resolving Russia's mounting economic and political concerns. Strengthening the state through centralization and the erection of the "power vertical" has become a marker of Putin's eight-year rule.

The imperial tradition and myths about Russia's preordained status of super power have had considerable impact on its perceptions of the threats to security and the ensuing security policies. The decline and collapse of the USSR struck a severe blow to Russian status internationally and its image as a super-power. The loss of the former Soviet Republics not only reduced the size of Russian territory, but also significantly damaged its strategic position with regard to access to the high seas and strategic resources. The deteriorating military-industrial capabilities that could not compete with the military and economic performance of the West were a source of significant unease. Like imperial Russia and the Soviet Union before, contemporary Russia has been insecure about the openness and indefensibility of its new borders as well as encirclement by what it perceives to be, at least moderately hostile states. Internally, a wave of nationalist and separatist claims that threaten a further disintegration of Russian territory have exacerbated this post-imperial frustration.

Faced with imminent decay, Russia was in no position to perform its imperial function of continual geopolitical expansion. It only sought to preserve its landmass and retain the state on a vast area of land that was in danger of shrinking away.[16] Russia's handling of the Chechen conflict has been a product of its imperial policy, a "test of Russia's imperial will." [17] The Chechen war and concomitant counterterrorism operations have been used to preserve the Russian "imperial body" against all odds of further degeneration. The policy toward Chechnya has been invigorated by several elements: the archaic views on the backwardness of the Chechen people; primordial beliefs in the historical enmity of the Chechen toward Russians and their supposed propensity for violence; and Russia's "calling" to protect the Slavs, Orthodoxy, and the West from the grip of Islamic radicalism.[18] According to Putin, Chechnya was an "irresponsible quasi-state" that became a "gangster enclave while the ideological vacuum was quickly filled by fundamentalist organizations".[19] This kind of rationalization employed by Russian leadership is not unique to the Chechen conflict. It is a frame commonly used by imperial incumbents to justify their fight against anti-colonialism.[20]

It should be noted, however, that the Chechen resistance forces have always posed variable levels of threat to security of the Russian state. The first Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev let various armed groups to carry out attacks on the Russian security forces and engage in a range of criminal activities under his watch. Aslan Maskhadov, elected as a President of Chechnya in 1997, had limited success in curbing the growth of radical Islamic groups,

which continued insurgency campaign against Moscow. Yet, the first military campaign in Chechnya was instigated by fear of the Chechen precedent for other discontent republics, and the primary motive for the Chechen war was to prevent disintegration of Russia. The second Chechen war was launched in response to insurgents' operations in Dagestan and a series of bombings in the heartland of Russia. The latter attacks were blamed on the Chechen resistance groups, a fact that has never been fully confirmed, and many analysts pondered over the role of the second war in boosting legitimacy and support for Putin. Furthermore, no level of threat can justify the extent of atrocities committed by the Russian military against the Chechen, official tolerance, if not outright support for, their discrimination, and demonization of the entire Chechen population in statements of some politicians and Russian mass media. Not only did these practices expand the support base for guerilla fighters and terrorists, they also prompted the change in the tactics of the Chechen insurgents who resorted increasingly to terrorist attacks inside and outside of Chechnya.

The Tsarist and Soviet empires were held together by strong authoritarian rule. The preservation of Russia's territory by means of the war and counterterrorism also revived authoritarianism. Against the backdrop of the military and counterterrorism operations in the North Caucasus, the government launched extensive political and administrative reforms carried out under the guise of restoring order, reducing lawlessness, and combating terrorism.

The first in a series of the state-wide transformations was aimed at eliminating dysfunctional features of Yeltsin-style federalism. Russia was divided into seven federal districts likened to the six Governorate Generals established by Alexander II in the wake of an assassination attempt in 1879.[21] The presidential envoys, heading each federal district and accountable directly to president, have been tasked with the restoration of the preeminence of federal law and order, and coordination of federal agencies' activities in the districts they head. Yet, their unofficial assignment – to monitor the threats to state security and assist in the consolidation of Putin's regime – was similar to the tasks of the Governorate General formed in the epoch of the Tsars.[22]

The 1866 assassination attempt by a young Russian revolutionary, Karakozov, gave the Tsar an excuse to take away certain municipal freedoms, and clamp down on the democratic press.[23] The Dubrovka theater crisis of 2002 and the 2004 Beslan tragedy supplied the Russian government with a pretext for abolishing direct popular elections of regional leaders. The curtailment of media and political freedoms, and establishment of barriers for electoral competition have further strengthened the powers of the ruling regime.

The reliance on repressive and simplistic military-bureaucratic solutions to complex security problems falls in line with the imperial practices of coercion and the related belief regarding the effectiveness of the use of force. The Russian government has traditionally had a low threshold for the use of violence and few scruples about using coercion over negotiation as a policy tool. The Russian security agencies have frequently been on par with the "terrorists" in terms of their indifference for human lives and disdain for individual freedom. The impunity with which crimes were committed by the Russian troops and security services' units over the course of the war and counterterrorist operations resembled the measures of the Soviet security forces and practices of the Tsarist secret police, which also operated unchecked by any law.[24] In modern Russia, as in Soviet or Tsarist times, Russian citizens have rarely had legal protection if pressure was exerted to force their collaboration, confession was extracted under duress, or arrests were made on the basis of false information.

To conclude, in the context of Russia's counterterrorism policy, the imperial tradition manifested itself in the notion of terrorism as an attack on the state, its interests and territory. Further, the protection of the state required the resurrection of sophisticated forms of authoritarianism. The forceful means of control is the essence of authoritarian rule. This explains the primacy of coercive, retaliatory, short-term counterterrorism responses that have been adopted by the Russian regime. The unrestricted expansion of the state's repressive powers for protection and preservation of state interests has rarely yielded good results. Instead of resolving security problems, the imperial tradition calls for their suppression. Inevitably, they re-emerge.

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NOTES:

[1] Perovic, J. 2006. "Moscow's North Caucasus Quagmire." ISN Security Watch, January 6. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=16070>.

[2] Perovic 2006/

[3] Many of Putin's administrative reforms have been inspired by the idea of consolidating Russia's strength and political unity. Putin's fortification of the "power vertical" refers to a series of administrative measures aimed at bolstering Russia's federal structure and institutions severely weakened during Yeltsin's regime.

[4] Lieven, D.C.B. 1989. "The Security Police, Civil Rights, and the Fate of the Russian Empire, 1855-1917." In *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*, eds. O. Crisp and L. Edmondson. Oxford University Press, p.238.

[5] The 1998 law "On Combating Terrorism" did not differentiate between terrorism as a complex socio-economic phenomenon and individual manifestations of terrorism. It conflated goals with methods of terrorism, thus, failing to differentiate between terrorism and other types of violent crime. The 2006 law "On Counteraction to Terrorism" defines terrorism as "practice of influencing the decisions of government, local self-government or international organizations by intimidating the population or using other forms of illegal violent action" as well as the "ideology of violence". According to some legal experts, the definition of terrorism as practice and ideology lends itself to broad interpretations. There are legitimate fears about the possibility of "stretching" the definition to any offensive ideology or political agenda.

[6] Kikot', V.Y., and N.D. Eriashvili, eds. 2004. *Терроризм: Борьба и Проблемы Противодействия* [Terrorism: Combat and Problems of Prevention]. Moscow, Russia: UNITI, p.103; Shumilov, A.Y. and Yakushev, V.V. 2002. "Развитие Правового Регулирования Борьбы с Терроризмом в России" [Development of Legal Regulations of Combating Terrorism in Russia]. In *Современный Терроризм: Теория и Практика* [Contemporary Terrorism: Theory and Practice], ed. V.I. Marchenkov. Moscow: Voennyi Universitet Ministerstva Oborony RF, p.144-6.

[7] Shoumikhin, A. 2004. "Deterring Terrorism: Russian Views." National Institute for Public Policy. <http://www.nipp.org/Adobe/Russian%20Web%20Page/February%20webpage.pdf>

[8] Khlobustov, O. 2005. *Gosbezopasnost' ot Alexandra I do Putina* [State Security from Alexander I to Putin]. Moscow: Eksimo.

[9] Shumilov, A.Y. and Safonov I.I. 2005. "Типичные Оперативно-Розыскные Версии по факту совершения террористической акции" [Typical Scenarios of Investigation and De-

- tection after the Commission of a Terrorist Act]. In *Терроризм: Правовые аспекты борьбы* [Terrorism: Legal Aspects of Counteraction], ed. I.L. Trynov. Moscow: Eksmo, pp. 247.
- [10] Trenin, D. 2001. *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border Between Geopolitics and Globalization*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, p.75.
- [11] Barber, J. 1995. "Russia: A Crisis of Post-Imperial Viability." In *Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State*, ed. J. Dunn. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, pp. 35-6.
- [12] Pain, E. 2005. "Will Russia Transform Into a Nationalist Empire?" *Russia in Global Affairs* 3(2):71.
- [13] Putin, V.V. 1999. "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium" as translated in R. Sakwa. 2002. *Putin: Russia's Choice*. London: Routledge, pp.251-62.
- [14] Barber 1995, p. 35.
- [15] Gavin, S. 2007. "The Russian Idea and the Discourse of Vladimir Putin," *CEU Political Science Journal*, 1, p. 52.
- [16] Pain 2005. In his address to the Federal Assembly, Vladimir Putin described the "retention of the state on a vast area" as Russia's thousand-year project (Putin 1999).
- [17] See "Russia's Future: Whither the Flying Troika," *The Economist*, 7 December 1991, p. 19.
- [18] Hughes, J. 2007. *Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. xi.
- [19] Hughes 2007, p. 111.
- [20] Hughes 2007, p. xi.
- [21] Hughes 2007, p. 123.
- [22] Petrov, N. and D. Slider. 2007. "Putin and the Regions," In *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, ed. D.R. Herspring, 3rd edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.; Trifonov, A.G., and Mezhev V.V. 2000. "Генерал-губернаторство в Российской Системе Территориального Управления" [Governorate Generals in the Russian Territorial Administrative System]. *Politicheskiye Issledovaniya* 5:22-30.
- [23] Vordyugov, G.A., ed. 2001. "Политическая Полиция и Политический терроризм в России (Вторая Половина XIX – начало XX вв.)" [Secret Police and Political Terrorism in Russia (Second Half of the 19th – Beginning of 20th c.). Collection of Documents. Moscow: AIRO-XX, p.10.
- [24] Lieven 1989, p. 256.

Suicide Terrorism as a Tool of Insurgency Campaigns: Functions, Risk Factors, and Countermeasures

By Luis de la Corte and Andrea Giménez-Salinas

1. Introduction

Suicide attacks are offensive operations where success depends upon the death of the perpetrator. In most cases, the practice of suicide bombings represents the highest point of escalation towards a maximum level of destructiveness promoted by terrorist or insurgent campaigns. On the other hand, suicide operations are methods of growing application among insurgent groups. We have only to remember the most significant armed conflicts and terrorist episodes of the last three decades: for instance, the conflicts and attacks in Lebanon, Israel, Sri Lanka, Iraq, United States, Spain, United Kingdom, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, etc.[1]

This paper offers a short review of the recent scientific literature about three main issues related to suicide violence. First, the strategic objectives as well as tactical and operational advantages of suicide attacks in the context of asymmetric conflicts. This will help to understand the rationale underlying the use of this tactic as well its instrumental utility following a plan designed by the leaders of an organization.

Nevertheless, suicide operations are not choices that are implemented by an organization, initially. As we explain later, usually these operations are the consequence of strategic shifts that follow strategic, tactical and operative criteria. Second, we interpret several scientific hypotheses about the socio-political causes of suicide terrorism in terms of risk factors. This could be useful to understand the conditions that might increase the probability of organizations opting for suicide methods rather than other tools of violence; whether alone or in combination with other political initiatives. Furthermore, this approach could help to design measures and policies to counter and prevent these kinds of attacks, an issue that will be addressed in the final section of this article.

2. Strategic goals with tactical and operational advantages

Contrary to some stereotypes, suicide attacks involve an instrumental logic. Rather, violent organizations chose suicide attacks from among a variety of tactical options in order to achieve certain strategic, tactical, and operational goals.[2]

The strategic goals most often associated with suicide operations are the following:

- Expulsion of foreign occupying forces;
- Obtaining national independence;
- Destabilization or replacement of a political regime;
- Intensification of a violent conflict in progress;
- Interruption of some process of peaceful solutions for a political, ethnic or religious conflict.

It can be observed through the study of suicide campaigns conducted in Israel and Iraq that the above objectives are not necessarily contradictory. Suicide operations against Israeli targets share the same goal with other forms of violence from Palestinian radical groups: the foundation of a new state in Palestine. However, all suicide campaigns undertaken by Palestinian groups have entailed a significant increase of violence and, on more than one occasion; have been utilized to interrupt peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).[3] In the case of Iraq, jihadi insurgent groups have directed their suicide operations against quite different targets with different purposes. Some operations are directed against Coalition Forces to expel them from the country and others against the Shiite population of Iraq in order to promote a civil war. It should be noted that each of those strategic goals could be pursued using conventional terrorist and insurgent methodologies.[4] For this reason, qualifications for suicide terrorism as a choice above other tactics should be evaluated by exploring the tactic's potential advantages over other types of violent actions. From a tactical and operational point of view, these advantages are:

High lethality. Suicide operations cause much more casualties and material damage than any other typical insurgent method, especially when they are conducted against civilians. Suicide attacks have caused nearly 50% of victims registered since 1968, despite the fact that they represent a minority of the total number of terrorist incidents during that period. This makes suicide campaigns a very attractive option for the weaker contenders involved in asymmetrical conflicts.[5]

Intense psychological and social impact. Because of the high number of casualties that are produced and the spectacular and illustrate the fanatical determination of its perpetrators, suicide attacks generate more anxiety, sense of helplessness, fear, and social disturbance than any other conventional violent method. Furthermore, these effects usually involve intensive media coverage.

Facilitates access to certain well-protected and high value political, military or symbolic targets. For example, political leaders or public buildings.

Precision guaranteed by means of the attacks. The use of suicide volunteers to activate explosive devices decreases dependence on remote controlled systems. The ability of the suicide bomber to decide the exact time and location of detonation provides the opportunity to adapt to any unforeseen change, such as an unexpected increase in protection arrangements of the target. Even if the suicide bomber would be stopped by a security force, he/she could still activate the explosive and cause some damage.

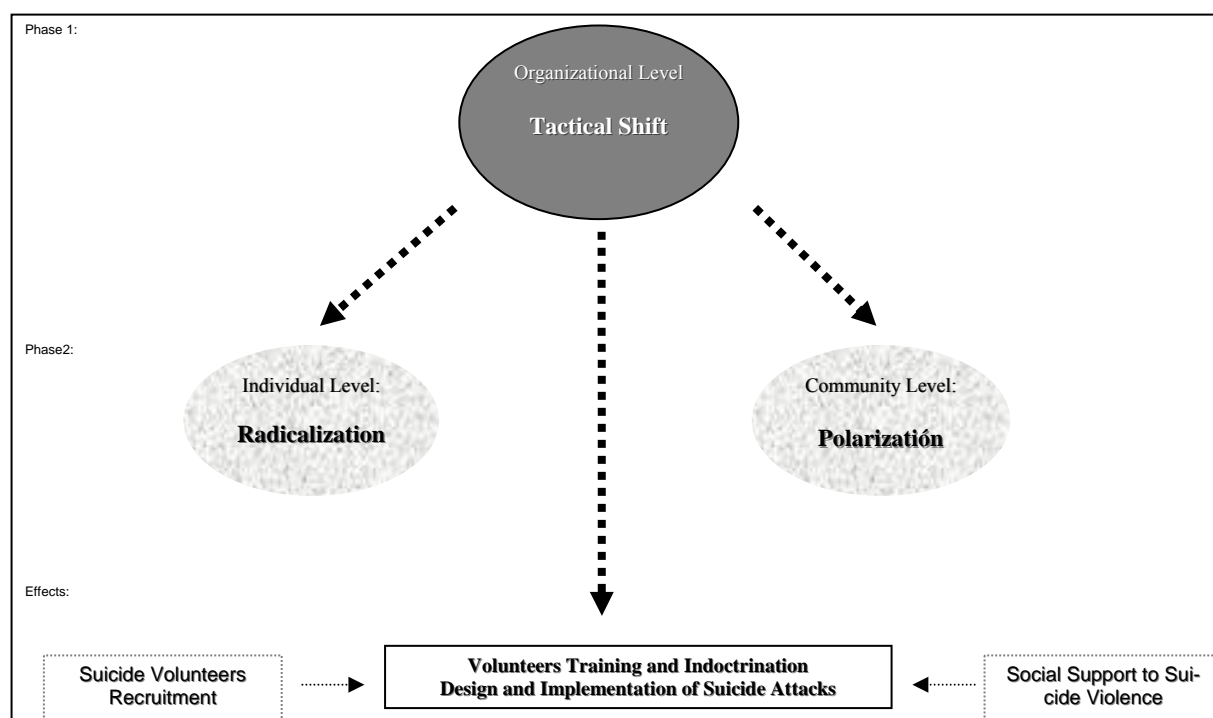
Simplification of the attacks and risk reduction. The death of the suicide bombers eliminates the need to design an escape plan as well as the risk of being captured and subsequently leaking sensitive information to the adversaries.

3. Risk factors of suicide campaigns

The data and studies accumulated over the last years make it possible to identify several conditions that correlate with suicide campaigns. We interpret these conditions as factors that could contribute to an increase in the risk that an insurgent or extremist group will resort to suicide violence.

At least, three main conditions are associated to the emergence of a suicide campaign. According to a theoretical model recently proposed by De la Corte and Giménez-Salinas, the satisfaction of those conditions occurs in two successive periods (see Figure 1).[6] A first phase involves the activation of collective deliberation and instrumental calculations inside an insurgent group (more specifically within its apex and its elite leadership). The ultimate outcome of this deliberation is a tactical shift in favour of promoting the use of suicide attacks. But the implementation of those operations requires two more conditions that should be simultaneously satisfied during a second phase. On one hand, the political or religious attitudes of the insurgent passive supporters must be polarized to the point that the organization favours or, at the very least, excuses the use of suicide violence. Moreover, this condition should be complemented by a radicalisation process that must be extreme enough so that the members of the organization are willing to participate in suicide operations (volunteerism is an almost universal feature of suicide attacks[7]).

Figure 1: Motivational Processes that Promote Suicide Campaigns



In the following section some risk factors are addressed to understand the conditions increasing the risk of a tactical shift to suicide methods and the risk of a process of polarization and radicalization.

Risk factors related to tactical shifts

According to available academic studies, the choice to promote a suicide campaign becomes more likely with the intervention of one or more of the three following factors [8]:

- 1) *Feeling of stagnation, crisis or failure in the use of other insurgent methods:* suicide operations may be perceived as an effective method to accelerate the resolution of certain conflicts.

2) *Coexistence of several insurgent groups pursuing equivalent goals*: one of those groups may use suicide attacks to capitalize attention on their community of reference. According to several analyses, that has been a key factor in explaining the increasing periods of suicide terrorism in places like Israel and Sri Lanka.[9]

3) *Pre-existence of suicidal activity*: the adoption of suicide methods by an insurgent group can result in a contagion effect encouraging other groups to introduce this method into their operational repertoire. This effect can be reproduced by two types of insurgent groups: those who are involved in the same conflict and those who participate in different or distant confrontations.

Risk factors related to the processes of polarization and radicalization

The polarization and radicalization processes that fuel suicide campaigns are closely related phenomena. After all, both processes are based on very similar psychosocial effects which include an attitudinal change coherent with certain political or religious arguments and a belief set that justifies suicide campaigns. Those changes could be facilitated by the subsequent factors:

1. *Dissemination of a subculture of martyrdom*. As pointed out by Gill[10], the concept of a “subculture of martyrdom” refers to a set of beliefs and symbolic resources that have been extracted from the political culture or the religion that insurgent groups who perpetrate suicide attacks share with a constituent community. These beliefs and symbolic resources are adapted in order to build a moral interpretation of suicide attacks as a legitimate and heroic sacrifice in favour of a certain community or social collective, or as a response to a sacred obligation (in the case of suicide violence promoted by religious groups). Obviously, the spreading of a subculture of martyrdom is frequently connected with religious indoctrination and generally speaking should be understood as the result of several activities developed to attain that goal: proselytizing, preaching, charismatic leadership, propaganda, intensive indoctrination of future suicide bombers, etc. [11] The subculture of martyrdom that promotes jihadi suicide violence adds two frequent and strong motivations for “martyrdom operations”: as a way of atoning for the previous sins, or as an action that would be compensated with a rewards after death and/or some benefits to the suicide bomber’s family in life (from cash bonuses to free apartments).[12]

2. *Implementation of bloody counterinsurgent strategies*. Although a universal pattern cannot be set out, the correlation between overreactions to terrorism and the increase of terrorist activity has been noted on several occasions. That premise can also be applied to suicide terrorism. The polls show that the percentages of support for “martyrdom operations” are higher in countries or regions where potential sympathizers of the insurgent groups have suffered severe repression perpetrated by institutional or foreign security forces.[13] Nevertheless, it should be noted that this is a controversial topic. For instance, the study of Pape shows that this condition does not always manifest itself in the same way. Generally speaking, there exist numerous examples of counterproductive counterinsurgent operations, in terms of how such operations contribute to an increase in suicide terrorism. Further, we can also find cases where suicide campaigns have occurred during periods of relatively lax counterinsurgent operations.

3. *Higher contrast of identities between insurgents and their adversaries and targets.* Usually, the larger the perceived differences between aggressors and their enemies are, the greater the levels of violence observed. In the same way, it seems more likely for suicide campaigns to receive significant social support when the perpetrators of suicide attacks are perceived as members of a wider social community and there exists a clear contrast of identities between that community and the targets or victims of the attacks. Such contrasts may be based on any perceived difference, ranging from religion to nationality, political ideology to social status and profession (indeed, that is the reason why suicide attacks against military personnel or senior officials gain a stronger social support than those attacks carried out against civilians), etc.

4. Some operational aspects

The success of suicide operations is dependent on several conditions: a maximum level of secrecy, reconnaissance of the scene, the procurement of materials and the acquisition of information about the target. Secrecy ensures the preservation of the surprise factor, which is crucial for most operations. Familiarity with the attack's location, and information about the target, facilitates the anticipation of actions just before the attack and the planning of the suicide operation itself. Ordinarily, suicide bombers are supported by a cell whose members provide the attackers information on the target, safe accommodation, food, materials, explosive devices, and clothing, etc. Generally, just before the attack one of those members perform a final reconnaissance of the scene before engaging the suicide bomber.

There are different procedures for carrying out a suicide operation. The choice depends on the resources available to the group, the level of damage that is intended, and the identity of the target. Focusing on recent trends, the use of an explosive vest or belt rapped around the body and hidden under heavier clothing (SBBIEDs or Suicide Borne Improvised Explosive Devices) has become typical. The preparation of SBBIEDs is easy and cheap. The type of material used for these kinds of suicide attacks are often among the most powerful explosives, such as TNT or C4 (typical in Iraq), usually supplemented with shrapnel, ball bearings or nails. Some vests contain a radio transmitter which allows for remote detonation from a cell phone. This allows the planning cell to ensure that the operation goes through as planned regardless of whether or not the 'martyr' suffers from second thoughts, or if he suffers a heart attack, or is intercepted by security forces. If the attack seeks to cause civilian casualties, suicide volunteers are trained to detonate themselves in crowded places, such as bazaars or public spaces.[14]

In other cases, suicide bombers load their explosives in vehicles to crash them against their targets (VBIEDs, Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices). The use of VBIEDs increases the damage caused by the insurgents, but is a much more expensive and more complex mode of attack. The explosives used could be fuel, TNT, PE4, mortar ammunition, rockets or other artillery material. The most commonly used vehicles are motorbikes, sedans, or trucks. When cars are used several vehicles could participate in the same operation. The first car is sometimes used to distract people and break some door or barrier. Less often, suicide bombers utilize boats or airplanes to carry out their attacks, i.e. 2001 9/11 attacks.

5. Some new trends

There are other important trends not related with the technology of an attack. Two are the most significant: the implementation of suicide operations by small and isolated home-grown terrorist networks and suicide attacks which are carried out by women.

Until the end of the Twentieth Century well structured organizations used to have a near monopoly on the use of collective violence. This was also the pattern with respect to suicide terrorism; e.g., groups like Hezbollah, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or Kurdistan Workers Party. The violence (suicide or not) promoted by those groups with insurgent goals traditionally fulfilled two conditions: it was a violence almost exclusively carried out inside a specific country or territory, and it was a violence that generated large amounts of support from a particular constituency. However, this classical pattern is no longer the case. Terrorist attacks (including suicide operations) are increasingly perpetrated by small, less structured and isolated networks, such as al-Qaeda and other groups integrated into the global jihadi movement. Those networks do not need to emerge within a broader constituency, who support suicide attacks, or if they do, their supporters could be a virtual constituency.[15]

The March 11th attack, whose perpetrators finally committed suicide some days after the operation in the Madrid trains, is an example of suicide violence carried out by a home-grown jihadi network. Those attacks were planned and executed in order to help insurgent movements operating in far territories by forcing the withdrawal of Spanish troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.[16] Suicide operations conducted by networks like the Madrid 3/11 group also have shown that a total differentiation among trainers and executors, which is common in other suicide insurgent organizations, is not an essential condition for suicide violence.

Although some nationalist groups like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam or the Kurdistan Workers Party have used women as suicide bombers, until recently it did seem likely that jihadi salafists would use them. There are precedents in Lebanon, from the mid 1980s, and Sri Lanka during the 90s, but the participation of women in jihadi suicide attacks has increased significantly in the past few years with examples in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan or Chechnya.[17] Sometimes, women who commit suicide attacks are motivated by specific reasons like the need for revenge, the death of some member of their families, the desire to prove their equality with male peers or the aspiration to escape the predestined life expected for them.[18] There are several operative advantages in using women as suicide bombers. First of all, this avoids the profiling used against men. Secondly, by simulating pregnancy, women can carry more explosives than men. Finally, suicide attacks by women capture the attention of the media easily.

As well as the use of women as suicide bombers, there is also a new trend that consists of using suicide bombers with other (traditionally) non-aggressive profiles. For example, al-Qaeda in Iraq has been using children and mentally deficient people who either freely or unwittingly participate in suicide operations.[19]

6. Measures to counter suicide attacks

It is possible to distinguish two basic types of countermeasures to suicide campaigns: defensive and offensive measures.[20]

Defensive measures

Defensive measures try to keep suicide bombers from reaching their targets. These include the erection of physical barriers, the installation of cameras and surveillance systems, as well as the implementation of road blocks, border checkpoints, etc. Some restrictions can be imposed to block access to information needed for planning suicide attacks (i.e., information about key infrastructure and routes or information about targets).

Military units in conflict zones can apply further defensive measures: building perimeters, armouring light vehicles, using firearms to repel the approach of car-bombs, etc. It is not by coincidence that suicide operations recently carried out in Iraq have produced more civilian casualties than military ones, which does not mean that those operations have not damaged the work of allied counterinsurgency operations. However, by forcing military units to increase self-defense measures, suicide campaigns have contributed to the isolation of military units from the civilian population.

Offensive measures

Offensive measures are those that try to prevent or reduce the implementation of suicide attacks. A preliminary offensive measure could be pre-emptive attacks against groups that promote suicide bombings in order to reduce their resources and capabilities, i.e., destroying their training infrastructure, capturing their leaders and militants, cutting their sources of funding, etc. Nevertheless, such actions involve risks. Experiences like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also suggest that offensive operations could help to increase the number of sympathizers willing to replace insurgents that have been arrested or killed.[21]

Collecting intelligence about radical organizations is a secondary offensive measure that cannot be underestimated. Access to sufficient and rigorous information about the intentions of radicals, their plans, resources, infrastructure, procedures, etc. is of vital importance to prevent further attacks.

Finally, it is also crucial to use any available resource to reduce the insurgent group's capabilities for recruitment. Above all, this goal requires the implementation of measures to decrease the risk factors that contribute to the radicalization and polarization processes. The following countermeasures, further this final goal.

1. Mollifying any political, cultural, or socioeconomic condition that could promote the sense of threat or feelings of humiliation, revenge or hate within the real or virtual collectives who can support suicide bombers and their insurgent organization.
2. Applying specific operative measures to reduce access to propaganda distributed for disseminating the subculture of martyrdom.
3. Implementing information and counterpropaganda activities to counteract the arguments and ideas used to legitimate suicide violence. It should be noted that the chance of counteracting jihadi suicide violence requires an intense cooperation with moderate leaders, institutions and members of the Muslim community.

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NOTES:

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A Perspective on Intelligence Reform

By Charles S. Faddis

Several years ago, while I was working operationally overseas, a team of analysts visited our office from headquarters in Washington, DC. These officers were on a tour of the region, and one of them offered to give a briefing to our local personnel regarding a terrorist group active in the country to which I was assigned and on which a lengthy piece of finished analysis had just been completed. The briefer, who had written the analysis, had reached a number of very interesting conclusions concerning the evolution of the group and believed that he was able to make a number of very detailed predictions regarding the direction this group would take in the future. Among other things, he was convinced that the group was losing support, was unable to maintain its previous level of activity and was likely to decline precipitously in significance in the months and years ahead. It was, in his opinion, no longer a serious threat to American interests. The briefing was well done, tight, focused, and, unlike so many such presentations, captivating.

It was also absolutely wrong.

I had run many of the sources which had produced the intelligence on which this analysis was based. I knew that the only thing that had changed regarding this group was our access. Where once we had significant detail on the internal workings of the terrorist organization in question, and a clear understanding of the complexity of its operations and the breadth of its capabilities, we were now slowly going blind. The group had not evolved. It was not losing support. We were simply unable to maintain access. The danger from this group was not declining. It was increasing.

It was a stark reminder of an obvious but frequently forgotten truth. You cannot analyze information you do not have, and your analysis is only as good as the intelligence on which it is based. You can listen to rumors, draw inferences from tiny snippets of information, and extrapolate from other known cases all you want. In the end, if you do not have hard facts, you are guessing, and, as events over the last many years show, in the business of terrorism you are often guessing wrong.

Seven years ago an al-Qaeda terrorist attack on U.S. soil killed roughly three-thousand Americans. Any number of American agencies and departments failed miserably in the discharge of their responsibilities on that occasion. First and foremost, 9/11 was a failure on the part of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Put simply, we did not have the sources inside al-Qaeda we needed to warn us of the coming attack. Just as it had been on so many prior occasions, the U.S. was caught flat-footed and dealt a staggering blow. This time, however,

the impact was that much greater in that the attack occurred on U.S. soil and the death toll was enormous.

In the wake of these attacks and the subsequent intelligence errors concerning WMD in Iraq, the United States Government instituted a whole raft of “reforms” within the American Intelligence Community (IC). The most notable of these was the creation of an office of Director of National Intelligence, the DNI, who was charged with the task of coordinating the activities and budgets of the numerous separate intelligence agencies, which make up the IC. Whether or not he has the power to do this task remains to be seen. It should be remembered that prior to 9/11 there already was an individual, the Director of the CIA, whose job it was to run the IC. That he failed completely to direct and coordinate the activities of this sprawling community, which is overwhelmingly under the direction of the Pentagon, was directly attributable to the fact that he had no substantial authority to back up what was in reality a largely symbolic position.

In like fashion, all sorts of other changes and “reforms” were rolled out across the IC. Additional layers of bureaucracy were added in many organizations. New procedures were implemented with the goal of ensuring wider distribution of sensitive information both within the IC and to local law enforcement. Some of these made sense and were long overdue. Many of them had nothing to do with the problems at hand and were a reflection of the fact that bureaucracies and bureaucrats, left to their own devices, will always do what they do best. They will create rules, procedures and regulations.

Nothing in any of this addressed the most significant issue: the failure of the CIA to collect the human intelligence required to have provided advance warning of the pending attacks. The fact remained that the CIA, the United States’ premier intelligence organization, for a variety of reasons which I will delineate, remained incapable of performing its primary mission and safeguarding the nation it served.

The CIA is crippled by a whole host of ailments. Some of the wounds are self-inflicted. Many of them are not. None of them are curable by the addition of more bureaucracy and yet more layers of supervision, coordination and oversight. Meetings, PowerPoint presentations and long term strategic plans penned by individuals who have never met a terrorist and would not know one if they tripped over him do not produce intelligence reports. The CIA, which began life once long ago in the mists of time as a band of bold, aggressive, highly creative individuals called the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), has become a stiff, rigid, overly bureaucratic structure dominated not by risk takers and rule breakers but by cautious, ladder-climbing bureaucrats. It has, in short, lost what made it special and capable of doing the impossible and transformed into just another plodding federal agency. In this context, therefore, all changes and “reforms” which add yet more bureaucracy and more “drag” take us not toward a solution but in exactly the wrong direction.

What exists as the CIA today is largely a product of the Cold War. It is a structure designed to collect information within the context of a long, largely static strategic struggle. It uses as its primary collection mechanism officially covered officers assigned abroad and targets mostly foreign officials. In the context of a worldwide confrontation with the Soviet Union, which lasted for decades, this structure generally made sense. It allowed the United States to place large numbers of personnel abroad, relatively quickly and cheaply, and it positioned those officers to work against their adversaries, Soviet intelligence and their allies.

Such a structure makes no sense whatsoever given the primary targets against which the organization is required to work today. If I am serving under official cover in a Third World country today, I am likely in a good position to make contact with local officials, with prominent members of the business and academic communities and to focus on other officials from nations hostile to American interests. My status as an American official, however, will be of no value whatsoever in gaining me access to members of terrorist groups, individuals involved in the smuggling of radiological material or drug cartels. At best, my status in the country will be of no help at all. To the extent I am required to live and work in true name and attract attention to myself via my official duties, my cover may, in fact, be a great hindrance.

Just as important as the structure of the organization, however, is its culture and its philosophical approach to risk and the conduct of operations. An agency built to collect long-term strategic intelligence via officially covered officers placed abroad develops a certain approach to risk taking. The emphasis is placed on the avoidance of a “flap”, a diplomatic incident. Operations which have the potential to turn ugly or to go wrong are avoided and the risk versus gain analysis is heavily weighted toward eliminating risk. If it comes to a choice between running an operation (op) or making sure that nothing goes wrong, the op is likely not to be run. There will always be time later to come back and make another attempt at collection. Threats are thought of as distant and slow in evolution.

Over time this approach becomes embedded in the culture of the organization. Officers are not routinely subjected to physical risk. They understand that, if caught, they may be questioned briefly, but the worst that will happen is that they will be sent home prematurely. They come to accept this as a way of life, and, gradually, they come to regard any level of risk beyond this to be unacceptable. An operation which has the potential to lead to the capture or death of a staff officer is simply considered “too risky”.

This focus on risk avoidance has been intensified by the political pressures on the CIA. Again and again, the President of the United States has called upon the CIA to conduct activities which were not supported by the Congress. In some cases, such as the Iran-Contra affair, these activities were, in fact, conducted contrary to explicit legislative prohibitions. When uncovered, these activities have provoked vicious Congressional responses, and significant numbers of CIA officers have either been forced into early retirement or prosecuted as a result.

Congress for its part, while entrusted with oversight authority, has chosen to focus more on making political hay out of CIA mistakes than it has on constructive engagement. Agency officers routinely find themselves being used as pawns in a power struggle between the Executive and Legislative branches of the United States Government. The result is predictable. Career officers, with spouses, children, mortgages and college expenses to think about keep their heads down, choose the safe route and avoid pushing the envelope.

During the Cold War the consequences of these problem were often less apparent. When you are trying to collect information on Soviet missile forces within the broader framework of a worldwide generational conflict, taking the long, patient, safe approach is, after all, usually wise. Unfortunately, it makes much less sense within the context of a fast moving, global war against a vicious enemy determined to strike, not a decade from now, but next week.

For this kind of conflict a very different approach is needed, one which emphasizes creativity, daring and imagination over deliberation and caution.

In essence, what is needed is an approach much like that which the original OSS utilized. While the OSS had a nominally military structure, it was a civilian organization and it employed a wide, eclectic mix of individuals ranging from paratroopers and Army officers to actors, professors and professional sports players. It also drew from the full cross-section of American society including in its ranks members of some of the oldest and most prominent families in the nation as well as recent immigrants still fluent in the tongues of their native lands.

The result was a free-wheeling organization staffed by what its leader William Donovan referred to as his “glorious amateurs” and characterized by what he described as “discipline daring”. Nothing was too novel or risky to be considered. The only thing that was absolutely unacceptable was a lack of movement. Donovan could accept failure. He could not accept inactivity. In his words, “If you fall, fall forward.”

The OSS understood precisely the level of risk which would have to be accepted in order to acquire the intelligence the nation needed. It posted officers abroad under a host of covers. Sometimes they operated as singletons, sometimes as armed teams working with local partisans. They were driven always, however, by the same dynamic: to do whatever was required to collect the needed intelligence. In many cases, this meant sending staff officers into occupied territory where they lived and worked undercover for months or years at a time stealing German, Italian and Japanese secrets. A significant number of these officers were caught, and many died a horrible death, but the OSS continued to do whatever it took to complete the mission. It did not relish the death of officers in the line of duty, but it understood that it was the inevitable cost of success.

This attitude and approach were not necessarily unique to the OSS. The British Special Operations Executive (SOE), for example, on which much of the OSS was patterned, shared a similar approach. Regulations and procedures were not regarded with much favor. Results were.

In the case of the OSS, those results were staggering. An organization which was created in 1942 was by war’s end in 1945 operating worldwide and running sources under the most extreme circumstances imaginable from the heart of the Third Reich to the jungles of Burma. The conditions under which the organization operated were often brutal, but, despite this, the organization forged ahead, and the United States acquired the intelligence it needed to win the Second World War.

Just as the OSS’s approach to intelligence collection was not necessarily unique, so too are the problems the United States faces in the collection of human intelligence not unique either.

The United States has been struck by terrorists without warning over a period of many years, beginning in Lebanon in the 1980s and culminating on September 11, 2001. Other nations have endured and continue to endure their own intelligence failures: the Madrid train bombings, the London underground bombings, the Beslan school massacre and a long list of at-

tacks in India perpetrated by Pakistani militants and their supporters. It has, in fact, become commonplace that terrorists strike without warning and that civilized nations are left to focus on managing the after effects of the event and deliberating regarding retaliation.

We have come to think of this as inevitable. It is not. The fact that intelligence agencies using current methodologies are not collecting the information that we need does not mean that it is impossible to collect this information. It does mean, however, that we are going to have to change our methodologies in order to achieve success. Approaches evolved to gain access to information on the strategic plans of hostile governments are not likely to prove useful in helping us get inside of small, highly compartmented organizations composed of brutal fanatics. For that task, we are going to have to go back to an approach which accepts as a given a level of risk much higher than that we have been tolerating and which employs techniques more in tune with those used to penetrate organized crime syndicates and drug cartels than those of the classic Cold War espionage cases.

Officers may still be placed abroad under official cover when this makes sense. More frequently, however, we are going to have to move to a system of placing officers overseas without the benefit of any official status. They will need to live and work in the milieu they are expected to penetrate. Their lives, when posted abroad, may be more analogous to those of Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (and Explosives) agents penetrating motorcycle gangs in the United States than they will to those of current officially covered intelligence officers. This will afford them much greater natural access to targets of current interest, but it will also mean that they will be subjected to much greater risk and that we will have to accept that level of risk to operate.

As noted earlier, if I am an intelligence officer serving abroad under official cover, and I get caught in the act of violating local laws, I am likely to be held for a short period of time, declared persona non grata and then sent home. It may not be the best day I ever had, and it may mean a great deal of disruption for my family, but I will survive.

Once we step across the line and begin to place significant numbers of officers abroad without the benefits of official cover and ask them to penetrate violent terrorist groups and organized crime cartels, we are entering an entirely different world. Now if I am caught, it is likely that I will die. That death may well be slow, painful and horrifying. The first notice that my home office has of a problem may be that my body is found by the side of the road downtown.

This is not glamorous. It is not pretty. It is not easy. It will require not only an acceptance of this kind of risk on the part of the organization, but also on the part of the individual officers called upon. It will also, frankly, call for a cadre of tough, well-trained and very disciplined operatives, who have been brought up from the point of their induction into the organization to cope with these demands.

That said, I would submit that we have no choice but to move in this direction. The failure of the United States Government and other allied nations to focus on the necessity for reform in the collection of human intelligence has had massive negative consequences to date. Continued inaction may well prove to be infinitely more damaging.

The world around us is evolving at a phenomenal pace. In many parts of the world the artificial "order" imposed by nation states that are largely the creation of former colonial powers is disintegrating. Lawless areas which hold the potential to serve as safe havens for terrorist groups appear with ever increasing frequency. We may or may not succeed in keeping Afghanistan from reverting to its role as a base for terrorist operations. Meanwhile, much of the Northwest Frontier Province is already serving as the de facto headquarters for al-Qaeda and Somalia is spiraling yet again into total chaos. Absent a miracle, the bulk of that war-ravaged nation will once be under the control of Islamic extremists within months.

Given the pressures of over-population, energy and water shortages, unemployment and religious fanaticism there is no reason to think this situation will improve anytime soon. We are living in a world which for the foreseeable future will include large, ungoverned areas wracked by tribalism, violence and extremism. These will be the base camps for terrorism for a long time to come, and if we are going to prevent future attacks we are going to have to field intelligence services which are capable of grappling with the organizations bred in such areas.

Nor is the nature of the attacks we face likely to remain static. While significant portions of the globe seem to be unraveling, the pace of technological advancement continues to quicken. Pakistan may be on the brink of implosion, but it's still possible for a scientist in Peshawar operating with limited resources to do a credible job of creating both biological and chemical weapons for use by an extremist group. Particularly when it comes to biological agents, this threat will only become worse in coming years. We may soon, in fact, be faced not only with threats from known, naturally occurring pathogens but from genetically engineered ones as well.

In short, while the impact of terrorism to date has been horrific it is likely that this impact will increase dramatically in the future and that we will be feeling it for many years to come. We do not have the luxury of continuing to treat this issue as something that can be resolved by the application of standard bureaucratic measures. New lines on wiring diagrams and ever larger staffs will not win this conflict. Small numbers of highly trained, disciplined and creative individuals empowered to take risks and push the envelope will.

None of this is code for an acceptance of some of the more questionable practices of the Bush Administration. I am a staunch opponent of the so-called "enhanced" techniques used in questioning of al-Qaeda detainees. I have interrogated a large number of terrorist captives. None of them was ever harmed in any fashion. They all talked.

This is an argument that we need to accept, that we are--whether we like it or not--in a struggle with a very brutal, fanatical foe. This foe is not Islam. It is a group of fanatics who seek to drag that great faith and the entire Islamic world back into a dark, fantasy version of the Seventh Century. If anything, on some level, it is a war for Islam to preserve it from those who would hijack it and destroy it.

We would like to hope that we could find a way to combat this menace in some clean, anti-septic fashion. We would prefer that we could throw money at the problem, create a few new agencies and promulgate some regulations and that it would all be better. It will not, and the cost of not coming to grips with the problem will only increase. Someday, in the

near future, when a nuclear weapon goes off in New Jersey or the bubonic plague sweeps London, it may become unbearable.

Human intelligence (HUMINT) is, of course, only one facet of the intelligence world. That said, it always has been and always will be the only form of intelligence which will definitively tell you the enemy's intentions. Signals intelligence and imagery may alert you to the fact that the Russians are massing troops on their border with Georgia. Only HUMINT will tell you what was discussed in yesterday's late-night meeting in the Kremlin and whether the deployment is intended to make a political point or is, in fact, a precursor to invasion.

The impact of HUMINT is all that much greater in regard to terrorism and the emerging threats associated with it. A small al-Qaeda cell operating with discipline and exercising good tradecraft will leave almost no traces detectable by other means. They will deal in cash. They will stay off the phones. Their logistical requirements will be minimal. In short, absent source reporting, there will be little if anything for you to see via other intelligence means.

Even a cell working on a WMD attack will produce a profile far below that which many people expect. Biological weapons can be made and biological agents mass produced in a small apartment using commonly available materials. There are no technologies for remotely detecting such operations. You may well be able to use technical means to confirm what was being developed once you raid the apartment, but only after someone has told you where it is and alerted you to its significance.

In short, as noted above, there is no magic, antiseptic solution to problem with which we are faced. We need better human intelligence. Despite their obvious value, other forms of intelligence will not compensate for our failure to collect it. We have suffered grievous losses already as the consequence of our failure to address this issue. The losses we suffer in the future may make what has gone before seem inconsequential.

We need to undertake real intelligence reform, not changes calculated to satisfy bureaucrats and staff aides, but changes which produce real, tangible results. We need to fashion human intelligence collection mechanisms which can go out into the dark places of the world and bring back the critical information we need to defeat terrorist organizations and prevent attacks.

It is all well and good to talk about connecting dots, but we need to remember a simple truth: You cannot connect the dots until you first collect them.

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About Perspectives on Terrorism

- Perspectives on Terrorism (PT) seeks to provide a unique platform for established and emerging scholars to present their perspectives on the developing field of terrorism research and scholarship; to present original research and analysis; and to provide a forum for discourse and commentary on related issues. The journal could be characterized as 'non-traditional' in that it dispenses with traditional rigidities in order to allow its authors a high degree of flexibility in terms of content, style and length of article while at the same time maintaining professional scholarly standards.

About the Terrorism Research Initiative:

- PT is a journal of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), an initiative that seeks to support the international community of terrorism researchers and scholars especially through the facilitation of collaborative and cooperative efforts. TRI was formed by scholars in order to provide the global community with centralized tools from which to better actualize the full potential of its labours. TRI is working to build a truly inclusive international community and empower it through the provision of collaborative projects to extend the impact of participants' research activities.
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