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The Applications of Human Intelligence in Counterterrorism

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Abstract

       After the attacks of 11 September 2001, a number of people began calling for an expansion of the human intelligence (HUMINT) resources of American security intelligence agencies. Few writers seem to have given much thought, however, to whether or not traditional methods of gathering intelligence via HUMINT would be effective against a group such as Al Qaeda, many of whose members are motivated in large part by religion. The aim of this work is to discuss whether traditional HUMINT practices of threatening and cajoling group members into passing information will be effective against Al Qaeda and its associated groups. This is done by studying historical case studies of effective HUMINT campaigns against terrorist groups sufficiently similar to Al Qaeda to allow comparison. This work will conclude that traditional HUMINT methodology will be sufficiently effective against Islamist terrorism to allow security intelligence agencies to undermine and apprehend these groups.

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Introduction

After the attacks of 11 September 2001, a number of people began calling for an expansion of the human intelligence resources of American security intelligence agencies.[1] Similar calls were heard in Western European countries, particularly after the terrorist attacks on London and Madrid. As it pertains to security agencies 'intelligence' refers to information regarding an enemy's or potential enemy's present or future hostile intentions. It is a 'product' that allows either a security or judicial agency, or a military unit, to take action in order to prevent or undermine the hostile intentions of the enemy. Human intelligence, or HUMINT, is simply any means of collecting intelligence via interpersonal contact between people. It has been posited that ignorance of HUMINT methods in intelligence gathering was a central reason that the US and its allies were vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Over-reliance on technological methods of intelligence-gathering, it was argued, had left security agencies blind to the activities of groups such as Al Qaeda who consciously took steps to avoid detection by various technological methods.

This phenomenon was exacerbated by the length of time it took to recognize Al Qaeda as a viable threat that had to be taken seriously. In 1996 one writer argued that America was faced with no "clear and singular present danger,"[2] and this attitude was reinforced by the relative safety of Americans from terrorist attacks until the bombings of US embassies in East Africa in 1998. This period of relative calm perhaps reinforced the attitude that HUMINT programs, some of which necessarily dealt with unsavoury

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[1] Clifford Beal and Andrew Koch, "Chronic HUMINT Underfunding Blamed Security Failures," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 19 September 2001.
[2] Goodman, Allan E. "Shifting Paradigms and Shifting Gears," in David A. Charters, A. Stuart Farson, and Glenn P. Hastedt, Eds., *Intelligence Analysis and Assessment*, London: Frank Cass, 1996. 3.

characters, ran counter to democratic ideals. John Deutch, then head of the CIA, promulgated a set of regulations or guidelines in 1995 that required any human source of intelligence to be vetted to ensure they were not taking part, directly or indirectly, in criminal activity. This immediately limited the number of potential human sources that the CIA could exploit for actionable HUMINT.

There were even those in the security intelligence field who were engaged in the expansion of US security against terrorist attacks believed that HUMINT resources were largely unnecessary, and that American security could be maintained by other means. Most US security agencies were active during the 1990s in reinforcing America's defences against terrorist attacks in some way. Between 1994 and 2000 the US increased spending on counterterrorist measures twofold, including: increased border security and improved immigration measures; improved powers of domestic surveillance; and steps against the support of designated groups – none of which prevented the attacks of September 11th.[3] Critics have argued that without the ability to monitor the activity of individual cells or the planning and training activities of target groups, no quantity of surveillance equipment or border guards could have caught Al Qaeda's Hamburg cell before it carried out its mission.[4] The argument thus follows that ultimately one of the most effective methods of subverting terrorist organizations is through direct personal contacts.[5] This involves anything from simple informal contacts with members of communities suspected of harbouring terrorists, to measures as involved as infiltrating

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[3] Yonah Alexander, *Combating Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries,* Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005.
[4] Laura K. Donohue, "In the Name of National Security: US Counterterrorist Measures, 1960-2000." *Terrorism & Political Violence*, Autumn2001, 13(3), 18.
[5] John Keegan, *Intelligence in War: The Value – And Limitations – of What the Military Can Learn About the Enemy*, Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004. 316.

agents into terrorist groups or coercing and cajoling group members to pass on information.[6]

However, few writers have given extensive thought as to whether traditional HUMINT methods of intelligence-gathering will be effective against a group such as Al Qaeda. One must consider which factors are most important to a practitioner of HUMINT in terms of a potential source's viability. While academics and pundits have called for 'more HUMINT,' many have only vague notions of what exactly is involved in conducting human intelligence operations. The methodology, funds, types of personnel and support required will all vary according to which terrorist group is targeted and depending on the group's own counter-intelligence and operational security measures, external support, as well as its ability to learn and change according to external circumstances.

It will be the aim of this work to discuss the viability of HUMINT as a tool for intelligence-gathering on transnational Islamist terror groups, considering the specific challenges they present to security agencies. In order to do so, this paper will be structured in three chapters. The first will give a detailed outline of the transnational Islamist[7] terror movement initiated by Al Qaeda, as understanding its structure, methods, and motivation will be critical to the exploration of effective HUMINT methods. The second chapter will present two case studies of prior counterterrorist campaigns that used human sources of intelligence extensively and to good effect: the British effort against

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[6] Gordon Corera, "Al-Qaeda resurgent six years on?" BBC New Online. 11 September 2007. Online source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6988356.stm. Accessed 17 October 2007.

[7] For the purposes of this paper, 'Islamist' is used to denote a large category of extremist Muslim groups that make up the bulk of religiously-minded Muslim terrorists. In other works it has been used to designate fundamentalist branches of Islam, but it is not the intention of this work to equate fundamentalism with extremism. The reason Islamist is used is that although Al Qaeda is, or was, specifically an Islamist-Wahhabist group, many of the groups and individuals that are now allied to the remnants of Al Qaeda cannot be effectively described as Wahhabist. Islamist is used instead, being a broader term.

the IRA in Northern Ireland, and the Israeli campaign against Palestinian terrorist groups. These cases have been chosen as for their similarity to the current context in two respects: the initial effectiveness of the terrorist groups' in avoiding detection and carrying out violent attacks in multiple countries and regions; and the widespread and effective use of HUMINT in the security agencies' counterterrorist operations. The third chapter is designed to suggest which methods will be effective against Islamist terrorism, given their historical effectiveness.

The Current Form of International Islamist Terrorism

"The threat now facing the world is far more dangerous than any single terrorist leader with an army, however large, of loyal cadres. Instead, the threat that faces us is new and different, complex and diverse, dynamic and protean and profoundly difficult to characterise." Jason Burke in *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the motivation, structure, and methodology of international Islamist terrorism as it exists today, in order that the current context can be compared to historical cases of effective counterterrorist operations, and ultimately so that effective HUMINT methods can be suggested for combating Islamist terrorism. The case will be made that what has been referred to as Al Qaeda no longer exists as a single group, but has disseminated its ideology and human resources to the degree that it can now be thought of as a transnational movement. The common ideology to which radical Islamist terrorists adhere will be explained, as well as the resilience of this ideology in the face of counterterrorist measures. Finally, it will be argued that the combination of a common ideology with the dispersal of Al Qaeda and its affiliates into small groups and even smaller cells has created a type of threat not very much unlike those against which HUMINT has been historically effective.

The general consensus among those who have studied Al Qaeda is that over the past decade it has evolved from a single large geographically static group into a 'movement' of multiple groups spread out over dozens of countries that are linked by ideology and,

less certainly, by command and control channels during joint operations.[8] It is argued that

Al Qaeda is not a coherent network as we understand it in the usual sense, but a

conglomerate of numerous groups and cells, all of whom share some common ideology

and are willing to cooperate.[9] While the attention of liberal democratic governments and

the Western media has been focused on Al Qaeda itself, the bulk of operational activities

has shifted toward groups that are associated with Al Qaeda and adhere to an overarching

ideology, each of which pose varying degrees of threat in their respective regions.[10]

There are now many groups around the world with religious-political aims analogous to

those espoused by Al Qaeda's central leadership under Osama bin Laden. There are, for

instance, Al Qaeda-affiliated groups in the Maghreb, the Middle East, Central and

Southeast Asia, as well as nebulous groups operating in liberal democratic countries, such

as the Islamist Group for Call and Combat (US), Takfir Wal Hijra (UK), Al Tawhid

(Germany), and Moroccan Islamist terrorists in Spain, all of which have changed their

names as the need arose.[11] While some of these groups have permanent links with Al

Qaeda, others have only a tenuous relationship with the group's central leadership, and it

would not be useful to think of them as part of Al Qaeda's organizational umbrella.

What they clearly share with Al Qaeda are those of its ideas and methods that suit their

common purposes. Some of the above-mentioned groups, particularly those in Southeast

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[8] Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," 429; Tarik Kafala, "Q&A: Is al-Qaeda behind the attacks?" BBC News Online, 21 November 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3227076.stm. Accessed 31 October 2007; R Borum and M Gelles, (2005) 'Al-Qaeda's Operational Evolution: Behavioral and Organizational Perspectives', *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 23, 472; Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror,* London: I. B. Tauris, 2003, 4; Michael Chandler and Rohan Gunaratna. *Countering Terrorism: Can We Meet the Threat of Global Violence?* London: Reaktion Books. 2007, 16.

[9] Raufer, Xavier. "Al Qaeda: A Different Diagnosis." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 26(6), November 2003, 394.

[10] Chandler, Michael, and Rohan Gunaratna. *Countering Terrorism: Can We Meet the Threat of Global Violence?* London: Reaktion Books. 2007, 29.

[11] Rohan Gunaratna, "The Post-Madrid Face of Al Qaeda," *The Washington Quarterly*, 27(3). 92.

Asia, want to be associated with Al Qaeda in order to 'tap into' wider feelings of anti-Americanism.[12] Al Qaeda, for its part, has been very opportunistic in cultivating such associations. The group of people that used to be accurately labelled Al Qaeda can now be more usefully thought of as an ideological movement, with Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants serving as inspirational and ideological figures rather than operational leaders.[13]

In a worst-case scenario, the transnational Islamist terror movement may have founded a disparate network of terrorist cells that adhere to the same extremist ideology and commitment to the cause but no longer require any direction or financing from a central authority in order to carry out attacks. All that is required is a shared set of goals and acceptable targets, and some form of catalyst to set a group's or cell's operations into motion.[14] In this scenario Al Qaeda's central leadership plays a motivational role, offering a set of common goals to which Islamists of varying backgrounds can adhere.[15] The videos that are occasionally released by bin Laden and his lieutenant Ayman al-Zawahiri are an example of this motivational role: they urge Islamist militants to continue fighting, justify the continued 'jihad' ideologically and religiously, while not offering specific instructions or targets.

Some writers have argued that Al Qaeda never was a single coherent group, but rather existed as a logistical base from which terrorist cells around the world were given

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[12] Kafala, Tarik. "Q&A: Is al-Qaeda behind the attacks?" BBC News Online. 21 November 2003. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3227076.stm. Accessed 31 October 2007.
[13] Frantz, Douglas, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat." *The Los Angeles Times*. 26 September 2004.
[14] Michael Ignatieff, "Lesser Evils," 2 May 2004, Online source: [http://www.oracleofottawa.org/Michael%20Ignatief_%20Lesser%20Evils.pdf] Accessed 8 Feb 2006. 2.
[15] Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, 6; Lesser, Ian O., et al. *Countering the New Terrorism*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 1999, 51.

funding and expertise.[16] The argument is that Al Qaeda has never had a single unique

organization but has always strived to adapt its structure and methodology according to

the circumstances with which it was faced.[17] The central leadership has at times

exercised significant control over the operations of cells with which it was directly

affiliated.[18] However, that control was exercised over a horizontal organization of

groups that were themselves amorphous and anonymous, operating sometimes

independently and sometimes in tandem with local militant allies and terror groups.[19]

Though this characterization does not accurately describe the permanent training camps

that had been maintained in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, it captures the multitude

of organizations that operate under the banner of 'Islamist jihad' throughout the Middle

East and Central and Southeast Asia. Unlike the permanent training camps, these groups

continue to operate at various levels of capability and are still capable of carrying out

attacks, as evidenced by the events in Mumbai, India in November 2008.

   Al Qaeda's organizational transformation has taken place concurrently with

changes in both recruiting practices and ideology, a process that has carried on over years

and began in earnest even before liberal democratic states responded to the attacks of

September 11th with increased securitization and military operations in Afghanistan and

Iraq. Following the loss of an easily identifiable nearby enemy after the Soviets retreated

from Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden began stressing the transnational features of Al

Qaeda and made an effort to identify the group's motivation with multiple Islamic causes,

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[16] Jason Burke, "Think Again: Al Qaeda." *Foreign Policy*. May-June 2004, 18.

[17] Raufer, Xavier. "Al Qaeda: A Different Diagnosis." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 26(6), November 2003, 394.

[18] Frantz, Douglas, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat." *The Los Angeles Times*. 26 September 2004.

[19] Hoffman, Bruce. "Change and Continuity in Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 24(5), January 2001, 418; and Lesser, Ian O., et al. *Countering the New Terrorism*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 1999, 62.

such as the plight of the Palestinians.[20] This move was designed to broaden Al Qaeda's appeal to Muslim radicals of different ideological convictions. Ian Lesser, in 1999, pointed out that Al Qaeda was beginning to organize itself in a less hierarchical structure, relying on cell leaders to use local recruits in their operations as well as assistance from affiliated militant and terror groups. As early as the mid- to late-1990s there were already at least a dozen independent or satellite groups associated with Al Qaeda, with bases throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Central and Southeast Asia.[21] Currently the ejection of Al Qaeda from Afghanistan, as well as effective counterterrorist measures elsewhere, has led to further cooperation between Islamist groups that were not linked beforehand. In other words Islamists who are not bent on global jihad are willing to cooperate with those who are, for short-term gains.[22] These groups cooperate operationally while each maintains its own command and control structures.[23] When necessary they may coalesce and combine their resources and efforts in 'swarming' tactics, but they are equally able to operate independently of each other. Islamist terrorists have indeed demonstrated a trend of increasing independence: in the attacks in Madrid and London, as well as those in Mombassa, Riyadh, Bali, and Mumbai, the attackers adapted to local conditions, demonstrated independence of direction and in some cases individual cells experimented with new methods.[24]

Most of the groups that are currently associated with the Islamist terror movement each have their own local objectives, but will share a broad anti-Western sentiment and

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[20] Mishal, Shaul, and Maoz Rosenthal. "Al Qaeda as a Dune Organization: Toward a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organizations." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 28(4), July 2005, 278.

[21] Williams, *Al Qaeda: Brotherhood of Terror*, vii-viii.

[22] Jones, Calvert. "Al-Qaeda's Innovative Improvisers: Learning in a Diffuse Transnational Network." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs.* 19(4), 2006, 559.

[23] Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 57.

[24] Jones, Calvert. "Al-Qaeda's Innovative Improvisers: Learning in a Diffuse Transnational Network." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs.* 19(4), 2006, 561.

Islamist ideology.[25] In this case, the structure that Al Qaeda and its larger affiliates will maintain is likely to be one without a central leadership that makes decisions regarding the movement's targets and plans, instead allowing individual groups freedom to both recruit new members, raise funds, and plan attacks.[26] However, it can be argued that this broad characterization of the movement as a decentralized coalition is too deterministic, and some authors argue that Islamist terrorists remain capable of changing their group name, structure, membership, and leadership as and when required.[27] Instead of adhering to a single characterization, the movement is constantly morphing according to needs and external pressures, such that there will be occasions when there seems to be no leadership whatsoever, and others when it will appear that there are multiple 'nodes' of leadership.[28]

In describing the threat from transnational Islamist terrorism Jonathan Schanzer emphasized the role of local Islamist organizations that started on their own but were co-opted into Al Qaeda's network or became closely allied with the group.[29] Mishal and Rosenthal used the example of a Kurdish Islamist group, Ansar al-Islam, which in 2002 reportedly cooperated with members of Al Qaeda operationally and received financial and training aid in return, but which was never forced to alter its operating procedures or its stated motivation. Al Qaeda forged a relationship with the group based on operational considerations rather than their own fixed priorities and interests.[30]

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[25] Pillar, Paul R. "Counterterrorism After Al Qaeda." *The Washington Quarterly.* 27(3), 2004, 102.

[26] Lesser, Ian O., et al. *Countering the New Terrorism.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 1999, 51.

[27] Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror.* London: I. B. Tauris. 2003, 5.

[28] Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," 430; and Lesser, Ian O., et al. *Countering the New Terrorism.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 1999.

[29] Schanzer, Jonathan. *Al-Qaeda's Armies: Middle East Affiliate Groups and the Next Generation of Terror.* New York: Specialist Press International. 2005, 16.

[30] Mishal, Shaul, and Maoz Rosenthal. "Al Qaeda as a Dune Organization: Toward a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organizations." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 28(4), July 2005, 280.

Close links are not even necessary between Al Qaeda's leadership and the various groups with which they have come to be associated. Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda may be most dangerous simply when they allow other groups to use their notoriety for their own purposes. The terrorists who carried out the 2003 attacks against the British consulate and an HSBC Bank branch in Istanbul did exactly this, using the Al Qaeda mantle to gain recruits, support, and to score propaganda points in the aftermath of the attacks.[31] During their trial some of the defendants claimed to have received direct help or training from members of Al Qaeda, but solid links could not be proved and the Turkish attackers themselves did not claim to be members of Al Qaeda.[32] In the case of the Islamists who carried out the commuter train bombings in 2004 in Madrid, there was very little evidence of direct channels of communication or training from members of Al Qaeda.[33] Most of the members of the cell responsible for the Madrid bombings were first generation immigrants, poorly educated, and were largely part-time jihadists who held full-time civilian jobs.[34] They were inspired by international Islamist jihadism, but required no direct links with a large group of established terrorists to carry out sophisticated, simultaneous, deadly attacks.

Using the original World Trade Centre bombers as an example, Lesser pointed out that modern Islamist terrorists did not easily fall into a single organizational category:

Instead they were like-minded individuals who shared a common religion, worshipped at the same religious institution, had the same friends and frustrations, and

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[31] Atran, Scott. "Op-Ed: A Leaner, Meaner Jihad." *New York Times.* 16 March, 2004.
[32] "Al-Qaeda 'Aided Istanbul Bombers.'" BBC News Online. 13 September 2004.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3653744.stm. Accessed 31 October 2007.
[33] "The Legacy of the Madrid Bombings." BBC News Online. 15 February 2007.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6357599.stm. Accessed 31 October 2007.
[34] Jordan, Javier, and Nicola Horsburgh. "Mapping Jihadist Terrorism in Spain." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 28(3), May 2005, 180.

were linked by family ties as well, who simply gravitated toward one another for a specific, perhaps even one-time, operation.[35]

Such self-generating independent cells have been made possible by the dissemination of expertise by Al Qaeda that has carried on in spite, or because of, the success of liberal democracies' efforts at disrupting the group's centres of training and leadership.[36] The disruption of their bases in Afghanistan certainly hampered Islamist groups' ability to carry out attacks against 'harder' military and political targets, but despite these disruptions Islamists were still able to carry out the attacks in Britain and Spain.[37] Ultimately all that is required for a terror cell to be a viable threat is sufficient expertise, either in the form of cell members who are veterans of training camps or information disseminated via the Internet, combined with determination and patience. While independently inspired amateurs and new recruits lack the skills needed to carry out successful attacks, association with long-term terrorists effectively overcomes this obstacle, either via personal contact or through email and internet chat rooms.[38] The funds and materiel necessary for attacks can be acquired relatively easily with sufficient patience and discretion, and this level of independence may now be the norm rather than the exception.[39]

Some authors have pointed out that a group that is as dispersed and fractured as Al Qaeda cannot be as effective as a single coherent group with solid lines of

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[35] Lesser, Ian O., et al. *Countering the New Terrorism*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 1999, 1-2, 22.

[36] Gunaratna, "The Post Madrid Face of Al Qaeda," 93.

[37] Keegan, *Intelligence in War*, 318.

[38] Frantz, Douglas, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat." *The Los Angeles Times*. 26 September 2004.

[39] Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," 430.

communication and support that span multiple regions. Indeed, such fragmentation may be an act of desperation designed to enable the group to survive the post-September 11th onslaught with the majority of its central leadership intact, rather than a calculated tactic designed to increase the group's reach and lethality. The absence of an attack on the scale of those on September 11th since that date lends credence to this position; however, not only is this a logical fallacy, it is beside the point. The attacks of September 11th were planned over the course of years, and it is becoming obvious that the Islamist groups that are well-trained and motivated are planning for a 'long war' in which success is measured by progress over the course of decades. Furthermore, even if it is the case that large-scale attacks are presently beyond the capability of international Islamist terror groups, multiple small-scale attacks against deployed military personnel or overseas commercial interests can be just as damaging to a state's security and national interests. In a 'long war' of this kind, occasional successes on any front are required to maintain the morale of the groups involved and capture the interest of potential terrorist recruits. While Western military forces are deployed in both Afghanistan and Iraq, what had been described by Osama bin Laden as the 'far enemy' has become the 'near enemy', and these forces present easier targets than their respective civilian populations at home. Furthermore, even moderately successful attacks on liberal democratic forces can be claimed as propaganda victories, particularly in cases where international media have not covered the incident. It is thus in the interests of Islamist terrorists for liberal democratic forces to remain deployed in these regions in a limited and static capacity; were Pakistan to invite NATO forces to pursue Islamist combatants across its border with Afghanistan the risk to Al Qaeda and its allies of attacking NATO troops would surely outweigh the

benefits. However, once Western forces redeploy away from Afghanistan and Iraq, those Islamists in dispersed cells around the world will once again endeavour to carry out attacks on 'soft' civilian targets inside liberal democratic countries.

For these cells to be effective, however, either independently or in joint operations such as September 11th, there must be some form of overarching ideology that is universally acceptable among Islamist terrorists, and presently this is established and reinforced by people like Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al Qaeda's ideological leadership has demonstrated striking resilience in the face of numerous direct attacks and setbacks. Despite the killing or capture of almost half the Al Qaeda leadership cadre, such as Khalid Sheik Mohammed, Mohammed Atef, Abu Zubayda, and Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi, an ideological leadership cadre remains at large and active. There are reports that Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was not destroyed at all, but like the Taliban simply displaced from its traditional bases and training camps to new ones established in the mountainous cross-border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan when it became clear that NATO troops would not follow them across the border.[40] The links between individuals in this region and Islamist groups around the world are as yet difficult to establish based on open sources of information, but some writers have argued that the ideological connections are strong. Some reports indicate that Islamist extremists are travelling to Pakistan for indoctrination and training in significant numbers, though not comparable to the number that travelled to Afghanistan during Al Qaeda's heyday there.[41]

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[40] Gordon Corera. "German concern over 'terror plot'". BBC News Online. 5 September 2007. Online source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6980199.stm. Accessed 17 October 2007.
[41] Laabs, Dirk, and Sebastian Rotella. "Terrorists in Training Head to Pakistan." *Los Angeles Times* Online. 14 October 2007. Online source:

However, though its ability to coordinate and plan operations is restricted presently, with an ideological leadership cadre intact Al Qaeda has the capacity to regenerate in any number of places and forms, and could feasibly achieve operational status of the same kind it enjoyed before the invasion of Afghanistan.[42] Its decentralized nature makes transnational Islamist terror less vulnerable to decapitation. With sufficient mid-level leaders, a group or movement is better able to withstand the loss of a central leader, no matter how charismatic.[43] Indeed, if the expertise required to carry out terrorist attacks has been effectively disseminated, even if Osama bin Laden and his leadership cadre are captured or killed, the movement will have the capacity to continue operations virtually uninterrupted for some years.[44] Without a common ideology disseminated by a charismatic and recognizable figure the movement would be hard-pressed to attract new members and support, but hardliners will continue to attempt attacks until physically stopped.

Despite their common overarching ideology, transnational Islamist terrorists are motivated by multifarious reasons, as might be expected considering the myriad of groups that are members of the movement. Islamist terrorists lack a detailed political agenda against which the use of sustained widespread violence might be effective,[45] making the use of HUMINT resources particularly important. Generally speaking, the motivation of radical Islamists worldwide is based largely on the concept of the 'ummah,'

[http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-jihad14oct14,0,2944827.story?coll=la-home-world]. Accessed 17 October 2007.

[42] Hoffman, "Al Qaeda, Trends in Terrorism and Future Potentialities: An Assessment." Santa Monica, CA: RAND. 2003. 8.

[43] Cragin, Kim, and Sara A. Daly. *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World.* Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation. 2004, 34.

[44] Jordan, "Al Qaeda and Western Islam," 2.

[45] Lesser, Ian O., et al. *Countering the New Terrorism.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 1999, 141.

or international realm of Islam. The concept originated from the expansion of the

original Muslim community at Medina to encompass the greater region of Arabia;

according to the Quran, all Muslims in this community were related by their covenant

with God, which transcends all other allegiances.[46] In recent years globalization and the

information age have reinforced many Muslims' sense of the ummah, as the struggles and

tribulations of their co-religionists in places such as the Palestinian Territories, Iraq,

Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Kashmir are broadcast into their homes via TV, radio, and

the Internet.

Broadly defined, fundamentalist Islam is characterized by dissatisfaction with the

ruling elites of Muslim countries, partly because of the failure of these rulers to alleviate

the conditions of their people.[47] In addition to dissatisfaction over matters of religious

observance and cooperation with Western states, the failure of rulers to alleviate the

conditions of the poorest members of society causes resentment and anger, and not just

amongst the disadvantaged. Most Middle Eastern countries are still developing and a

poor quality of life prompts many people to turn to their religion for comfort and

guidance.[48] Similarly, Islamization in many countries is thought to be partially driven by

regional geopolitical changes. Globalization, development, and increased securitization

following September 11th have all challenged the traditional elites among local

communities in some way, causing social destabilization and leading to a resurgence of

religious feeling among many Muslims in reaction to secular 'encroachment.'[49] Authors

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[46] Esposito, John L. *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2002, 39.

[47] Taylor, Max, and John Horgan. "The Psychological and Behavioural Bases of Islamic Fundamentalism." *Terrorism & Political Violence*, Winter 2001, 13(4), 40.

[48] Ibid., 40-41.

[49] Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*. 3.

have argued that in both of the above instances radicals and violent extremists are likely

to see an opportunity to take advantage of growing religious feeling, and will inject or

impose their own line of thinking on the process of reform.[50] In particular, the

interpretation by Islamist extremists of the concept of jihad is designed to instigate a

desire to take part in a campaign of violence against the perceived enemies of Islam. The

concept of jihad is a defining belief in Islam, a key element in the religion that is often

interpreted as 'internal struggle'; but when it is interpreted to mean violent struggle it

becomes an attractive method of resisting religious and cultural erosion.[51] Many

Muslims around the world believe that the current geopolitical situation demands a

violent jihad:

They look around them and see a world dominated by corrupt authoritarian

governments and a wealthy elite, a minority concerned solely with its own economic

prosperity, rather than national development, a world awash in Western culture and

values in dress, music, television, and movies.[52]

This is exacerbated by local political considerations. For example, some Southeast Asian

politicians are reluctant to be accused of kowtowing to Americans, a fear that leads them

to pander to anti-American sentiment fuelled by perceptions that the 'Global War On

Terror' is in reality a war on Muslims.[53]

Al Qaeda's ideological leadership espouses a religious ideology based on Salafism,

a branch of Islam that aims to revive the religion's historical influence and establish a

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[50] Ibid.; Taylor and Horgan, "The Psychological and Behavioural Bases of Islamic Fundamentalism," 40-41.
[51] Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, 26.
[52] Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, 27.
[53] Abuza, "Learning by Doing: Al Qaeda's Allies in Southeast Asia," 175-6.

coalition of Islamic states throughout the ummah. The term 'salafi' refers to the

immediate followers of Muhammad, but modern Salafism is a diverse mixture of

teachings from multiple religious scholars and Muslim writers. Ibn Taymiyya was a

radical medieval religious scholar who, among other writings cited by modern Islamists,

issued a fatwa against the Islamic Mongol converts for their failure to properly

implement Shariah law.[54] The 20th century writer Sayyd Qutb is thought of as the

'godfather' of modern Muslim extremism for several Islamist cultures. In travelling to the

US he became disgusted with what he perceived to be the 'moral decadence' of liberal

democratic states, and called not only for a return to more traditional Muslim practices,

but for violent jihad against non-Muslims and apostates who refused to reform.[55] Here

Qutb departed from other Salafi religious scholars in insisting that violent jihad was

necessary to re-establish the ummah. Other scholars had argued for internal, or personal,

jihad and preaching as methods of returning the ummah to its former 'pious' and

therefore glorious state.[56] The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, now a radical Islamist

group, began its existence as a Salafist group seeking to spread its brand of Islam through

proselytizing, community service initiatives, and the establishment of religious schools

and clinics.[57] The Brotherhood became radicalized after Egypt attempted to suppress it

using heavy-handed tactics, and its ideology was shaped Sayyd Qutb's writings on the

need for strict adherence to Salafism.

Al Qaeda and some of its affiliated groups adhere to a fundamentalist version of

Salafism known as Wahhabism, and furthermore interpret it in an even more extremist

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[54] Ibid., 46.
[55] Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, 56-61.
[56] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2004, 11-12.
[57] Benjamin, Daniel, and Steven Simon. *The Age of Sacred Terror.* New York: Random House. 2002, 58.

way than other Wahhabist groups, such as a majority of Muslims in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.[58] Radical Islamist terrorists aim to fulfil the political goals of Wahhabism and Salafism, as Sayyd Qutb suggested, through violent jihad, and target liberal democratic states because of the perception that they are preventing the establishment of the international Islamist nation.[59] Salafi Islam was described by one early 20th century Muslim intellectual as Islam that is "purged of impurities and Western influences," and was upheld as the only true religion that could save Muslims from Western colonial subjugation.[60] The US in particular has been a target because of what is seen as its pernicious influence in Muslim countries around the world, from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, to its military bases in Saudi Arabia and other states, and its continuing support of regimes that are seen as heretical or exploitative.[61] Effectively, Al Qaeda's ideological leadership can point to any number of different factors in an effort to motivate a given Muslim group to take part in the struggle against the obstacles of political Islam.[62]

Although the goals of Islamist terrorists are ultimately political, religion plays an important role in motivating them, though few Islamist terror groups could be described as engaging in 'religious terror'. Religion motivates Islamist terrorists to varying degrees; some are deeply committed to fulfilling the goals of Salafism and Wahhabism, while others have more locally-focused ethno-nationalist goals and refuse to negotiate

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[58] Roger Hardy, "Jihad and the Saudi Petrodollar," BBC News Online, 15 November 2007. Online source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7093423.stm. Accessed 15 November 2007.
[59] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 1.
[60] Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror,* New York: Random House, 2002. 56.
[61] Koschade, Stuart. "The Developing Jihad: The Ideological Consistency of Jihadi Doctrine from Al-Qaeda to the Revolutionary Fundamentalist Movement." Paper presented to the Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, Centre for Social Change Research, Queensland University of Technology, 27th October 2006, 6.
[62] Scheuer, Michael (as Anonymous). *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc. 2003, 47.

with non-Muslims, whom they consider apostates.[63] Unlike purely political or

ideological terrorists who tend to try to appeal to a particular constituency that they

purport to represent and defend, true religious terrorists act for no audience but

themselves and their deity; they are simultaneously activists and constituents. This

means that the usual restraints imposed on secular terrorists by the desire to appeal to

their constituents may not exist in the case of religious terrorism.[64] Rather than focusing

on limited political goals, the attacks carried out by committed religious terrorists are

broadly thought to be designed to destabilize entire societies.[65] Some authors have

argued that the very nature of Western liberal society may be anathema to some Islamists,

whose

> common religious creed … provides principles and a method for applying religious
>
> beliefs to contemporary issues and problems. This creed revolves around strict
>
> adherence to the concept of Tawhid (the oneness of God) and ardent rejection of a
>
> role for human reason, logic, and desire.[66]

That being said, this type of absolutist religious motivation is not overtly espoused

by the majority of Islamist terrorists or militants, and political grievances are in most

cases the more important motivating factor. Even high-ranking members of Islamist

groups may respond to political persuasion, as arguably demonstrated in the case of

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged planner of the September 11th attacks. In 2007 he

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[63] Paul L. Williams, *Al-Qaeda: Brotherhood of Terror*, Parsinappy, New Jersey: Alpha Books. 2002, 73-5.
[64] Bruce Hoffman, "Lessons of 9/11." Santa Monica, CA: RAND. October 2002. 27.
[65] Erik Van de Linde, et al. *Quick Scan of Post-9/11 National Counter-Terrorism Policymaking and Implementation in Selected European Countries: Research Project for the Netherlands Ministry of Justice,* Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002, 12.
[66] Wiktorowicz, Quintan. "Anatomy of the Islamist Movement." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 29(3), (September – October 2006). 207.

was brought before a hearing in Guantanamo Bay, during which Mohammed spent significant time explaining his motivation for engaging in attacks on Western targets. Though his statements are laced with religious imagery and terminology, his reasoning is eminently political, and focuses on the injustices and oppression that he believes the US is perpetrating in the Arabian Peninsula.[67]

While some authors have argued that Al Qaeda's central leadership and the group's original 'core' members can be considered religious terrorists, others have convincingly argued that it is a mixture of religious and political goals that defined Al Qaeda's motivation. Indeed, is in some respects transnational Islamists make up a social movement, to which disenchanted or disillusioned individuals turn as a balm for what they perceive to be deficiencies in their lives. Alternatively, individuals and social groups will join a radical Islamist mosque or organization either because they have been inspired by propaganda or are angry at what they perceive to be the moral bankruptcy of Western society and its exploitation and oppression of Muslims worldwide.[68] In any case, very few Islamists are pure religious terrorists, who undertake a violent struggle against their enemies only for reasons of religious obligation. Rather, their belief that they are fighting for a just cause, sanctified by their deity, leads them to justify the various forms of violence which Islamists have used,[69] and furthermore causes them to accept the concept of a 'long war,' and regard losses of personnel and resources as temporary setbacks.[70]

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[67] "Transcript: Khalid Sheikh Mohammed confesses 9/11 role." CNN Online, 15 March 2007.

[68] Borum, R and M Gelles, 'Al-Qaeda's Operational Evolution: Behavioral and Organizational Perspectives', Behavioral Sciences and the Law, (2005), 23, 473.

[69] Esposito, *Unholy War*, 42.

[70] Rohan Gunaratna, "Understanding Al Qaeda and its Network in Southeast Asia," in Ramakrishna, Kumar, and See Seng Tan. *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*. London: World Scientific Publishing Company. 2003, 118.

Due in part to the diversity of groups associated with Al Qaeda, the central leadership's stated goals for the movement have become increasingly broad. The goals cited by Al Qaeda's original leadership were various to begin with, and the movement's current goals have expanded to be sufficiently broad in order that they can be shared by numerous groups with different backgrounds, membership, and ideologies. The perceived offences of the United States in the Middle East have been cited by Islamist extremists as reasons to fight Americans and their Western allies in the ummah and in their home countries. Indeed, Pakistani and Kashmiri groups cited the American declaration of a Global War On Terror as the reason they would begin attacking US assets outside their immediate region.[71] The seemingly ubiquitous presence of Western culture around the world, often at the expense of local customs and culture, fuels extremists' anger, and is blamed for eroding or secularizing Islam.[72] Although there are distinct differences in the overall ideology and strategy of various Islamist groups, their core ideology is similar enough that they easily find common purposes.[73] Some writers have emphasized that radical Islamism has spread to countries that were once considered moderate, such as Morocco and Algeria, and is on the rise in former strongholds such as Kenya and Yemen.[74] Not only can these factors expand the membership of the international Islamist movement, they ensure that the movement is a self-perpetuating entity.

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[71] Hegland, Corine. "Global Jihad." *National Journal*. 36(19), 5/8/2004. 1396-1402.

[72] Byman, Daniel L. "Al Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand Our Enemy?" *World Politics*. 56(1), 2003, 143-5.

[73] Chandler, Michael, and Rohan Gunaratna. *Countering Terrorism: Can We Meet the Threat of Global Violence?* London: Reaktion Books. 2007, 25, 38-9.

[74] Frantz, Douglas, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat." *The Los Angeles Times*. 26 September 2004.

Despite their common ideology, the various groups that make up transnational Islamist terrorism as a whole should not be confused with one another. Treating this myriad of groups the same way will be counterproductive and obfuscatory. Instead, each 'type' of group should be dealt with separately and with its own nuanced approach.[75] In the years since September 11th, a theme in works on the decentralization of Al Qaeda is the recurring mention of Southeast Asia as a region of growing Islamist extremism. Several writers point to the links that have developed between various Southeast Asian Muslim militant groups and Al Qaeda and its Central Asian affiliates; some links appear to remain relatively tenuous while others seem rather close. Some of these links have been expanded and formalized since September 11th, based on group relationships that were in place since the early 1990s. Al Qaeda and its associates referred to pan-Islamic ideology to find common cause with the local militants and co-opted individuals and groups into establishing their own cells.[76] Although it must be said that seeing Al Qaeda and its allies behind every Muslim separatist insurgency in Southeast Asia is counterproductive, internationally-minded Islamists and groups in the region are interested in exploiting instability and local conflicts for their own broader purposes.[77]

The region as a whole has been attractive to Islamists for its growing Muslim fundamentalism and extremism, the presence of some hundreds or thousands of veteran insurgents throughout the region, and the region's overall lack of sophisticated governance. While some states in the region, such as Indonesia and Singapore, have effective political institutions and efficient security agencies, most Southeast Asian states

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[75] Byman, Daniel L. "Al Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand Our Enemy?" *World Politics*. 56(1), 2003, 142.

[76] Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," 428.

[77] Ramakrishna, Kumar, and See Seng Tan. *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*. London: World Scientific Publishing Company. 2003, 12.

remain 'weak states,' that are characterized by fragile, poorly organized political

institutions, hampered by inadequate resources and widespread corruption. The lack of a

strong central government tends to attract terrorists in operational and support roles,

allowing them to carry out planning and execution of attacks in the region with little

concern for operational security.[78] While some thousands of Southeast Asian Muslims

travelled to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets during that war, many more have fought in

local insurgencies, and there are thus many in the region who have learned the skills

necessary to carry out a campaign of violence. These individuals are either members of

an Islamic organization already, or are socially related to extremists so closely as to be

almost considered readily available recruits.[79]

Southeast Asian groups affiliated with Islamist terror seem motivated by

particularly multifarious reasons. Some, be they offshoots of the original Al Qaeda or

allies co-opted into its extended network of allies, wholeheartedly support the idea of

creating a pan-Islamic nation based on Sharia law and adhere to literal interpretations of

the Quran similar to those espoused by Al Qaeda's leadership cadre. Some groups were

already operating before coming into contact with Al Qaeda and, tired of being on the

'periphery' of Islamism, wanted to gain notoriety by their association with the larger

group.[80] Some groups have remained focused on fighting the governments in their own

countries, using Al Qaeda's 'brand name' to gain notoriety and attract new members.[81]

For those groups, such as Jemaah Islamiyah, which carried out the 2002 Bali bombings,

who expanded their list of targets to include liberal democracies outside their immediate

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[78] Abuza, "Learning by Doing: Al Qaeda's Allies in Southeast Asia," 172.
[79] Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, 233.
[80] Abuza, "Learning by Doing: Al Qaeda's Allies in Southeast Asia," 171.
[81] Aidan Lewis, "Suicide bombers shatter Algerian calm," BBC News Online:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7573118.stm, Accessed 20 August 2008.

vicinity, part of the motivation to do so may stem from frustration at their inability to evict what they see as the pernicious and secularizing influences of liberal democratic states from their countries or regions. A feeling of impotence led some local militants to expand their target selection beyond the assets of local governments, attempting attacks on Westerners in their own countries and their assets and citizens abroad.[82] Internationalizing their violent campaigns brought cooperation with Al Qaeda and its affiliates, contact with whom often led to further radicalization.

Some Southeast Asian Muslim terror groups remain motivated not by Islamist religious goals at all, but rather by the perception of repression aimed at Muslims worldwide that is reinforced by widely disseminated media coverage of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the political disenfranchisement of Islamists in countries such as Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria, and Turkey. In some instances feelings of widespread oppression are coupled with local grievances relating to territory or religious and political disenfranchisement.[83] One author has argued that the 'literalism and radicalism' of Wahhabism was anathema to most Southeast Asian Muslims, who adhere to significantly different traditions.[84] However, it must be noted that even the cooperation of a few thousand radicalized Southeast Asian Muslims would be sufficient to produce a credible threat from Islamist terror in the region. Furthermore, other authors have argued that radical Islamists and even Al Qaeda-style Wahhabists are gaining support in the region. Though still a minority they are vociferous, and are able to play on the increasing religiosity and anger of Muslims throughout Southeast Asia. They have consequently

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[82] Jason Burke, "Think Again: Al Qaeda." *Foreign Policy*, May-June 2004, 19.
[83] Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, 3.
[84] Azra, Azyumardi. "Bali and Southeast Asian Islam: Debunking the Myths," in Ramakrishna, Kumar, and See Seng Tan. *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia.* London: World Scientific Publishing Company. 2003, 44.

become disproportionately influential in shaping the attitudes and political agendas of their Muslim audience, particularly in the context of Muslim strife in the Middle East and Central Asia.[85] The few groups who were approached but resisted cooperating with Al Qaeda, such as Lashkar Jihad, hesitated for fear of losing their autonomy, but ultimately capitulated in the face of the successes of Al Qaeda and its affiliates.[86]

By couching all of their proclamations against the West and all efforts at recruitment in religious terms, coupled with a professed loyalty to oppressed Muslims everywhere, bin Laden and other ideological figureheads of the Al Qaeda movement are attempting to motivate not only current members but also potential recruits.[87] Al Qaeda's leadership has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to adapt and change its ideology and purported motivation in the face of both external pressure and internal desire to broaden its appeal to multiple and various Muslim militant groups. Indeed, despite their espousal of Islamist religious ideas, Al Qaeda's leadership derived its ideology from a number of elements, in order that it be plastic enough to appeal to the ideological and political leanings of multiple groups.[88] Another tactic Al Qaeda's leadership uses is to constantly refine and broaden their list of grievances against liberal democratic countries and their allies in Muslim governments; in so doing they attract people from multifarious political and religious affiliations.[89] Its all-encompassing ideology is arguably the group's greatest strength, as the idea of a global struggle, broadly in the name of Islam,

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[85] Abuza, "Learning by Doing." 176.

[86] Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, 15.

[87] Scheuer, Michael (as Anonymous). "Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America." Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc. 2003, 31.

[88] Javier Jordan and Luisa Boix, "Al Qaeda and Western Islam," *Terrorism & Political Violence*. (Spring2004), 16(1). 2.

[89] Kitfield, James. "Osama's Learning Curve." *National Journal*. 33(45), 2001. 3506 – 3511.

appeals to Muslims of all different creeds.[90] Al Qaeda's ideological leaders have made

an effort to commingle the religious and political objectives of multiple Muslim groups

when creating propaganda pieces.[91] In a 2006 communiqué with the press, Ayman al-

Zawahiri began referring not to Al Qaeda but to the 'revolutionary fundamentalist

movement,' a conceptualization closer to the atomized structure that so many authors

have suggested.[92] This change in terminology is thought to be designed to broaden the

appeal of Al Qaeda's ideology. In order to illicit cooperation from Southeast Asian

militant groups, Al Qaeda's regional representatives took it upon themselves to align the

movement's stated broader goals with those of local groups, the hope being that this

would expand the movement's operational capabilities as their newly affiliated groups

coordinated their activities with that of the international movement.[93] This has been

largely successful, and its ideological malleability is an important reason behind the

original Al Qaeda's success at inspiring and instigating a global jihadist movement.[94]

The religious malleability of the Al Qaeda movement's ideological leaders has been

effective, as the groups associated with the movement have been able to recruit people

from virtually every region and ethnicity, as long as they adhere to radical Islam. For

instance, Al Qaeda has historically made an effort to recruit both Sunnis and Shiites and

focuses on worshipping Allah above all and fighting non-believers, rather than

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[90] Chandler, Michael, and Rohan Gunaratna. *Countering Terrorism: Can We Meet the Threat of Global Violence?* London: Reaktion Books. 2007, 19.

[91] Cragin, Kim, and Sara A. Daly. *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World.* Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation. 2004, 31-2.

[92] Koschade, Stuart. "The Developing Jihad: The Ideological Consistency of Jihadi Doctrine from Al-Qaeda to the Revolutionary Fundamentalist Movement." Paper presented to the Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, Centre for Social Change Research, Queensland University of Technology, 27th October 2006, 7.

[93] Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," 431.

[94] Chandler, Michael, and Rohan Gunaratna. *Countering Terrorism: Can We Meet the Threat of Global Violence?* London: Reaktion Books. 2007, 94.

determining which branch of Islam is the rightful inheritor of Muhammad's teachings.[95]

Some Sunni Islamists claiming to be allies of Al Qaeda, in particular Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq, continued to vilify and persecute Shiites, but within the movement these seem to be a minority.[96] Whether or not this religious pluralism is a deliberate measure designed to broaden the movement's appeal or is simply an extension of the pan-Islamism of Salafist teachings, Al Qaeda and its allies have proven to be dynamic recruiters. Zachary Abuza argues that one of the most impressive capabilities of the group Jemaah Islamiyah "is its ability to recruit across the board, irrespective of education or class. While many of its leading operatives are madrasa graduates, Jemaah Islamiyah also has been able to recruit middle-class, western-educated professionals."[97] The profile of an Islamist extremist has diversified, and though young men remain the most likely terrorists, they no longer have a recognizable common social background. Whereas educated young men used to be prime candidates for recruitment, since September 11th young men from various walks of life have become involved in Islamist terrorism. From slum dwellers (Casablanca 2003) to shopkeepers and drug dealers (Madrid 2004), the sense is that any angry young man with the right social connections and approximate religious beliefs can become a terrorist.[98]

Many of the attacks on Western targets have been perpetrated by second or third-generation Muslim immigrants, or by Muslims who have become naturalized citizens in

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[95] Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 97.

[96] Koschade, Stuart. "The Developing Jihad: The Ideological Consistency of Jihadi Doctrine from Al-Qaeda to the Revolutionary Fundamentalist Movement." Paper presented to the Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, Centre for Social Change Research, Queensland University of Technology, 27th October 2006, 10.

[97] Abuza, "Learning by Doing: Al Qaeda's Allies in Southeast Asia," 173.

[98] Frantz, Douglas, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat." *The Los Angeles Times*. 26 September 2004.

their host/target countries.[99] For instance, the London and Madrid attacks were carried

out by 'homegrown' terrorists, leading some security analysts to worry that this type of

terrorist would become the norm rather than foreign operatives entering a country for a

suicide attack.[100] Despite recent setbacks for the Islamist terror movement, evidence

suggests that Muslim youths in the open democratic societies of the West and parts of

Southeast Asia are still being recruited by Islamist terror groups. Examples of

Westerners, or naturalized immigrants in Western states, turning to terrorism now

abound. For instance, the February 2007 plot to kidnap and publicly kill a Muslim

British soldier was to be carried out by Muslims born in the UK.[101] The problem in that

instance, in one writer's assessment, is that although only a few British Muslims find the

idea of a global jihad attractive, it will not be easy to predict who these people will be.

Previous plotters in Britain were for the most part second-generation immigrants that

independently sought out radical Islam, rather than recent immigrants who already held

radical Islamist beliefs.[102] More recently, police in Denmark charged four men with

conspiracy to carry out a terrorist act, two of whom were Danish citizens.[103]

The movement's constituent groups have also made an effort to recruit individuals

with American, Western European, and even Australian citizenship, as people who are

already citizens in these countries are not immediately subject to rigorous checks when

travelling from one liberal democracy to another. In June 2007, three German citizens

were apprehended in the region of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan, and German

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[99] Boaz Ganor, Ed. *Post Modern Terrorism: Trends, Scenarios, and Future Threats*, Herzliya, Israel: Herzliya Projects Publishing House, 2005. 55.
[100] "The Legacy of the Madrid Bombings." BBC Online. 15 February 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6357599.stm Accessed 31 October 2007.
[101] "From Baghdad to Birmingham," *The Economist*, 3 February 2007, 56.
[102] "From Baghdad to Birmingham," *The Economist*, 3 February 2007, 57.
[103] "Denmark Convicts Men in Bomb Plot." BBC News Online. 23 November 2007. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7109191.stm]. Accessed 23 November 2007.

authorities believed that "up to a dozen" other citizens may have travelled to the area for

terrorist training.[104] The three men arrested in September 2007 for plotting to carry out

bombing attacks on the US's Ramstein military base and the Frankfurt airport had

apparently trained in similar camps in Pakistan.[105] Worse, from the point of view of a

counterterrorist security agency, is the fact that two of those arrested in 2007 were

German nationals who had converted to Islam.[106] Had they been well-trained they would

have acted and dressed like any other Caucasian German, and would scarcely have drawn

attention to themselves. Other reports have indicated that several French Caucasian

Muslim converts were members of active terrorist cells that participated in suicide

bombings in Casablanca.[107] Islamist terrorists are therefore becoming more difficult to

profile, considering the diversity and sheer number of Muslims in Europe;[108] if they are

properly trained they will additionally be further difficult to track and anticipate.

    Where European Muslim communities have established their own mosques,

madrassas and charities, some of these organizations have become radicalized, and some

have furthermore allegedly been used as places of sanctuary for individuals operating in

international terror groups.[109] For example, this seems to have been the case in the

London mosque run by Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri in the late 1990s and early 2000s,

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[104] Gordon Corera. "German concern over 'terror plot'". BBC News Online. 5 September 2007. Online source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6980199.stm. Accessed 17 October 2007.

[105] Dirk Laabs and Sebastian Rotella. "Terrorists in Training Head to Pakistan." *Los Angeles Times* Online. 14 October 2007. Online source: [http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-jihad14oct14,0,2944827.story?coll=la-home-world]. Accessed 17 October 2007.

[106] "Germany foils 'massive' bomb plot." BBC News Online. 5 September 2007. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6979295.stm]. Accessed 17 October 2007.

[107] Hayder Mili, "Al Qaeda's Caucasian Foot Soldiers." *Terrorism Monitor.* 4(21), 2 November 2006, 2.

[108] Bruce Hoffman, "The Global Terrorist Threat: Is Al-Qaeda on the Run or on the March?" *Middle East Policy.* 14(2), Summer 2007, 48-9.

[109] J Millard Burr and Robert O Collins, *Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006, 258.

where fortunately the links with terror groups were relatively obvious and easily detected by British security agencies.[110] This problem of self-radicalization followed by membership in a terrorist group or cell is a trend seen throughout the mobile and diverse Muslim populations of Western European states. In the case of France, Muslim immigrants have not only largely failed to integrate into French secular society, but some seem to have become more radicalized after immigrating. According to Burr and Collins, of 630 Muslim-dominated French suburbs, "at least half" were well outside the mainstream of French society, with community members even refusing to learn French and continuing to make donations to charities that had known connections with terror groups.[111]

A Dutch study revealed some of the techniques used to recruit new Islamist terrorists in the Western European context. Recruiters look for potential candidates and then monitor and manipulate those individuals to foster further political-Islamist radicalization as a pre-requisite to any sort of terrorist activity, and the process can take some time.[112] The study found that two categories of individuals were potential recruits for Islamist terrorist groups in the Netherlands. The first was young immigrants who had spent little time in their host country and had temporary residence status or were recent citizens. The second category was second and third generation immigrant youths, who were native-born citizens and spoke Dutch fluently. It was thought that this second category was largely well adapted to Dutch society, but some youths seemed to suffer

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[110] Dominic Casciani, "Profile: Abu Hamza," BBC News Online, Online source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4644960.stm, accessed 15 November 2007.

[111] Burr and Collins, *Alms for Jihad*, 251.

[112] Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service. "Recruitment for the Jihad in the Netherlands: From Incident to Trend." December 2002. Online source, accessed 13 March 2007: http://english.nctb.nl/Images/Recruitment%20for%20the%20jihad%20in%20the%20Netherlands_tcm127-97477.pdf. 7.

from angst over their identity and saw the Netherlands' culture as anathema to Islam. As their views became more radicalized individuals tended to move away from their previous social network into the more extremist one that has adopted them. In the case of both recent arrivals and second generation individuals in any liberal democratic country this is the first step in a process of further radicalization and eventual recruitment, which involves not only religious teachings but the performance of lower level support tasks.[113]

In addition to exploiting social and economic factors, Islamist terrorists appear capable of very adaptive recruiting based on well thought-out individual factors and the specific needs of their respective group or mission. Some members of the Hamburg cell responsible for the September 11th attacks were allowed into the cell after a long (two year) vetting process and an equally long training programme that involved frequent visits to camps in Afghanistan. In the case of the 2002 Bali nightclub bombing, however, the central Al Qaeda organization did no more than fund and encourage the operation, leaving the recruitment and training of operatives to the local affiliate group, Jemaah Islamiyah.[114]

In any given situation where Islamist terrorists actively try to gain new members, social networks are important for forming the bonds that are critical to the groups' recruiting, and may in fact obviate the need for active recruitment by a group member. Islamist terror groups have typically recruited disenchanted young men, many of whom have already formed relationships with members of a mosque or Islamist group that holds extremist views, which they then adopt.[115] This disenchantment is created and fuelled

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[113] "Recruitment for the Jihad in the Netherlands: From Incident to Trend." 10, 20.
[114] Cragin, Kim, and Sara A. Daly. *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World.* Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation. 2004, 36.
[115] Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005, 130.

both by the policies of liberal democratic states that are interpreted as being anti-Islam, and by Muslim governments' cooperation with these policies or the implementation of their own repressive measures. The importance of social networks in terrorist recruiting suggests that joining a terrorist organization is often a group phenomenon. A recurring theme in studies of Al Qaeda's recruiting practices is the establishment of a network of friends that aggravate feelings of disenfranchisement and anger, and precede an individual's final decision to join a terrorist organization.[116] For example, one or two members of a mosque or group of friends who hold extremist views prompt others to radicalize their views, and membership in the group both reinforces radical feelings and prompts more of the mosque's attendees to join a terror group than would have decided independently.[117] In these cases an active terrorist may often act as an instigator. These 'liaison' terrorist operatives assimilate into their respective ethnic communities either in their home country or a liberal democratic nation, and proceed to frequent local mosques and Muslim groups. In this way they begin to instil extremist ideas in community members, which can either drive these individuals to join a group voluntarily or at least increase the chances that community members will support a group or join when actively recruited.[118] Taking the Hamburg cell responsible for September 11th as an example, there was no purposeful top-down recruiting of operatives. Members joined on their own initiative, having heard about Al Qaeda and come to their own radical conclusions about Islam and the West. Their views became more radical and Salafi in nature after their

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[116] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 108.
[117] Ibid., 110.
[118] Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 165.

training, but this was aided by discussions amongst the members of the individual cells; it is not the case that they were actively brainwashed by a recruiter in the field.[119]

Currently overt types of recruiting and proselytizing are much harder to carry out, due to the increased scrutiny of security agencies, and may no longer be primary tactics of Islamist groups in democratic states and their close allies, abandoned in favour of the more passive social networking methods. Furthermore, for those Islamist terror groups that have adopted an atomized or cellular structure, such as those operating in Western Europe and parts of the Middle East, overt recruiting by active members is not feasible: this would defeat the purpose of atomizing the cells and remaining clandestine. However, the radicalization of young Muslim men in states that are poorly governed in part or in whole and/or contain large numbers of Muslims such as Pakistan, Morocco, Yemen, Kenya, Somalia, and even Indonesia, means that overt proselytizing and recruitment can be widespread in these areas without raising suspicion.

This religious-political context, when combined with Al Qaeda's ideology of violent jihad, hundreds or thousands of willing recruits, and expanded use of the internet, creates a context in which Islamist terrorists' cycles of recruiting-training-operationalization do not require permanent training camps to be effective. For example, even after moving to Pakistan's ungoverned Western region Al Qaeda's leadership has not set up large training camps of the kind that had existed in Afghanistan, and Islamist terrorists are instead travelling to Iraq and Afghanistan to participate in the insurgencies there and become versed in the skills needed to carry out terrorist attacks.[120] Failed states such as Somalia and failing states such as Afghanistan, when combined with violent

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[119] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 107.
[120] Frantz, Douglas, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat." *The Los Angeles Times*. 26 September 2004.

political upheaval, become near-perfect staging grounds for an international terrorist campaign in lieu of formalized recruiting and training regimens. During the worst period of the insurgency in Iraq, recruits were drawn from surrounding countries, sent to locations around Iraq to train and participate in the insurgency, and then smuggled out of the country to carry out attacks independently.[121] Fortunately for those targeted by Islamist terrorists, the situation in Iraq stabilized and the country is no longer a haven for members of the Al Qaeda movement. Indeed, Iraq is now cited as an example of a successful hearts-and-minds counter-insurgency campaign. In mid-2007 many local insurgent groups in the province of Anbar became fed up with their erstwhile Islamist allies' sanctimonious proselytizing, which sometimes led to the brutal treatment of Muslim 'sinners', and formed so called 'Awakening Councils' to push Al Qaeda associates out of local villages. More recently in Afghanistan's Helmand province, though the local population would like to see NATO troops leave, they were just as condemnatory of the Taliban insurgents allied to Al Qaeda; the insurgents' offences were acts of criminality and brutality that undermined their credibility as stabilizers.[122] The problem in Afghanistan is that the Al Qaeda movement is reportedly being supported, or at least tolerated, by Taliban warlords that are well-entrenched in Pakistan's western region. The hope that Afghans will organize their own anti-Taliban and Al Qaeda militias is tempered by conflicts and tensions between Afghan tribes.

The intention behind explaining Islamists' motivation in this section is not to argue that diplomatic dialogue and political enfranchisement for Muslims are all that is required to permanently undermine transnational Islamist terrorism. These measures would help,

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[121] Dan Murphy, "In Iraq, a Clear-Cut bin Laden–Zarqawi Alliance." *Christian Science Monitor*. 30 December 2004.
[122] "Putting the Hell in Helmand," *The Economist*, 5 April 2008, 47.

certainly, but the pertinent issue is that for practitioners of HUMINT to be effective, it is not absolutely necessary to be perfectly versed in all the nuances of Islamist religious teachings. The point is that these are not, in any case, uniformly practiced by all Islamist terror groups. Unfortunately for security analysts and agent handlers, what is instead required is a nuanced understanding of the factors motivating individuals and groups of a given society or culture to join a terrorist group. Only then can effective methods of coercion and incentive be arrived at, either to induce a group member to pass on information about the group's activities, or to train an agent on how to fit in to the group such that it can be infiltrated.

After September 11th Al Qaeda, its allies and affiliates became acutely aware of the risk of being monitored and caught by security agencies, and took steps to overcome this challenge.[123] Bruce Hoffman has noted that some ninety percent of terrorist groups historically failed to survive beyond their first decade. That Al Qaeda has largely avoided this fate is both a mark of the time it had to prepare and build its international network and alliances with like-minded groups, and of the attention paid by Islamists to operational security. Indeed, terrorist expert David Kay argued that any group that survived beyond five years would have learned the skills necessary to adapt to a counter-terrorist campaign.[124] According to some reports, Al Qaeda historically ran its training camps in Afghanistan according to the strictest security; new recruits would spend weeks in Pakistan being screened for connections to Western intelligence agencies before being sent into Afghanistan.[125] Such a tradition of tight security is not likely to be lost among

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[123] Gunaratna, "The Post-Madrid Face of Al Qaeda," 92, 94.
[124] James Kitfield, "Osama's Learning Curve." *National Journal*. 33(45), 2001. 3506 – 3511.
[125] James Kitfield, "Osama's Learning Curve." *National Journal*. 33(45), 2001. 3506 – 3511.

Al Qaeda's veterans, and can easily be passed on by those who trained in the camps and have since moved back to their home countries or set up free-standing cells.

There is evidence that terrorists who are properly trained are constantly changing their modus operandi. People from different backgrounds, many with Western (particularly European) citizenship, come together to establish cells, but go on to blend with other Muslim religious groups or criminal gangs. Pierre de Bousquet, director of France's domestic intelligence service, was quoted as saying that "[Islamist terror] networks are much less structured than we used to believe. Maybe it's the mosque that brings them together, maybe it's prison, maybe it's the neighbourhood. And that makes it much more difficult to identify them and uproot them."[126] Although one might therefore refer to Islamist extremists as 'professional terrorists,' and there are many writers who have, there is nonetheless no single standard for their operating procedures despite the dissemination of training material; unlike the IRA, Islamists do not have one single 'terrorist handbook'. Even if individual operatives or cells are able to experiment with new techniques and plans, the implementation of these capabilities still requires refinement and operationalization.[127] Nonetheless, some common techniques are likely to be used, both for avoiding detection and maintaining offensive capabilities, as the necessary skills and training information has been and continues to be disseminated by veterans with similar training and operational backgrounds. Even in the absence of links with a central leadership that might disseminate standardized training information, interconnections with other cells and groups will allow terrorists to share skills and

[126] Sciolino, Elaine. "Europe Meets the New Face of Terrorism." New York Times. 1 August 2005. Online article:[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/01/international/europe/01threat.html?pagewanted=1&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/Organizations/A/Al%20Qaeda&_r=1]. Accessed 31 October 2007.
[127] Jones, Calvert. "Al-Qaeda's Innovative Improvisers: Learning in a Diffuse Transnational Network." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs.* 19(4), 2006, 562.

lessons learned.[128] This is particularly the case considering the 'explosion' of Islamist websites after September 11th.[129] Readily-available online training material includes information on how to establish safe houses, avoid detection by maintaining a cover identity, and withstand interrogation.[130] Although these lines of communication between groups are a point of vulnerability, there is no way of determining how effective the dissemination of this information has been without first-person access to the people involved.

One operational security measure that has been referred to above in the broad context of Al Qaeda's devolution of organizational control is the adoption of a cellular structure for the group's active members. This method of avoiding detection has been effectively used by terrorists in the past, including those in Ireland and the Palestinian Occupied Territories which will be studied in the second chapter. Many authors have argued that in addition to decentralizing command and control mechanisms, the entire operational capacities of Islamist terrorists have been atomized, such that many Islamist terror groups operating internationally now adhere strictly to cellular structures. In a cellular structure individual units remain small, comprising no more than approximately five people, and are kept totally separate from each other so that if one cell is compromised the others can continue operating. Furthermore, instead of receiving

[128] Javier Jordan and Nicola Horsburgh, Mapping Jihadist Terrorism in Spain." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 28(3), May 2005, 184.
[129] Daniel L. Byman, "Al Qaeda as an Adversary: Do We Understand Our Enemy?" *World Politics*. 56(1), 2003, 153; Jones, Calvert. "Al-Qaeda's Innovative Improvisers: Learning in a Diffuse Transnational Network." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs.* 19(4), 2006, 565.
[130] Kim Cragin and Sara A. Daly. *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World.* Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation. 2004, 48.

direction and plans from the movement's leadership, individual cell leaders are required to establish their own plans, methods, and funding.[131]

Once again, the issue of a dispersed cellular organizational structure raises the question of whether this actually limits groups' ability to coordinate complex large-scale attacks and in fact makes them less dangerous. That there have not been any attacks on the scale of September 11th since then is perhaps testament to the fact that atomized groups are incapable carrying out such complex coordinated attacks. Effective security measures and counterterrorist laws may have forced Islamist terror groups to improve their operational security, which includes organizing themselves into cells, or face capture. The arrests in 2007 of terrorist plotters in the UK and Germany indicate that security agencies are capable of foiling attacks planned by even very small cells so long as the cell's members expose themselves to detection in some way. One must remember, however, the adage that a terrorist group needs to succeed only once for its campaign to be considered a success by those targeted. The attacks on the transit systems in London and Madrid were carried out by free-standing cells, and caused dozens and hundreds of casualties respectively. A second attack in London two weeks after the first would have caused comparable loss of life, had the attackers been better prepared; the cell responsible had no discernible links to the one responsible for the first bombings. Attacks of this scale, carried out by independent groups of only a few individuals, do not need to be carefully coordinated and carried out simultaneously to be considered effective. If adopting a cellular structure makes terrorists harder to catch, ultimately they must be considered just as dangerous as a better-coordinated and larger group.

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131 R Borum and M Gelles, 'Al-Qaeda's Operational Evolution: Behavioral and Organizational Perspectives', Behavioral Sciences and the Law, (2005), 23, 476.

For some Islamist terrorists, working within a cell will not be a drastic change: during the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan, those recruits who showed promise were allegedly selected for specialized training in how to establish a cell and plan and carry out operations clandestinely.[132] Some who were given such training were ordered to establish sleeper cells in their home countries, while most were simply sent home at the end of the insurgency and were free to carry on their own operations for local grievances, which was largely the case with the Muslim insurgencies in Indonesia and the Philippines. Exacerbating the situation are the links between Islamist terrorists and organized crime. Organized crime networks, though not intrinsically part of any given terrorist movement, nonetheless support terrorism by providing logistical and financial resources that would otherwise have to be acquired by terrorists themselves at risk of capture.[133] According to a Southeast Asian scholar, some crime lords in the region have even taken it upon themselves to carry out terrorist attacks independently of any terrorist group, though there does not seem to be evidence that Asian organized criminals are becoming ideologically motivated.

A recurring assumption among writers on terrorism is that former Afghan insurgents still have some links to Al Qaeda affiliates and would be ready to carry out violent attacks again if called upon.[134] Unfortunately for security intelligence agencies, most of these individuals are unlikely to have direct links with each other, leaving the global population of past and present Islamist terrorists disjointed and individual leads difficult to follow in a linear fashion. Functional compartmentalization of the operational

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[132] Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," 430; Kitfield, "Osama's Learning Curve," 3506 – 3511.

[133] Lal, Rollie. "South Asian Organized Crime and Terrorist Networks." *Orbis.* 49(2), Spring 2005, 293.

[134] Ford, Peter, Sara B Miller, and Courtney Walsh. "Al Qaeda's Veil Begins to Lift." *Christian Science Monitor.* 20 December 2001.

elements of a terrorist group is designed to maintain strict operational security.[135] In

instances where such measures are not adhered to, Islamist terrorists have been just as

vulnerable to detection and arrest as other violent groups: in Singapore Jemaah

Islamiyah attempted to maintain a 'cell' containing hundreds of members, dozens of

whom were rounded up in only a few sweeps by local police between 2001 and 2003.[136]

The group's members exposed themselves to detection by carrying out criminal activity

to raise money to fund their operations. Initially some members of Jemaah Islamiyah

were therefore arrested for cases of theft and robbery, rather than terrorist activity, but

since each of them knew virtually every member of their enormous cell the information

that each captured member gave up under interrogation led to multiple arrests.[137]

Islamist terrorists are likely to learn from setbacks such as these, take lessons from

the activities of other groups, and change or modulate their operating procedures

accordingly. For a paradigm of effective cellular security, one need only look to

Turkey's Muslim militants. The Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front is a Sunni Islamist

radical group that is anti-Semitic and anti-Christian, most recently responsible for the

2003 bombings of the British Consulate and HSBC Bank branch in Istanbul.[138] It relied

heavily on the independent formation of free-standing cells by individuals who were

inspired by the group's propaganda. These cells were expected to then develop and

execute plans independently. Although the group's leader was arrested in 1999, the

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[135] Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 10.

[136] Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," 453, 456.

[137] Jackson, BA, JC Baker, and K Cragin, *Aptitude for Destruction: Organizational Learning in Terrorist Groups and Its Implications for Combating Terrorism, Vol 1*, Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2005, 79.

[138] "Istanbul rocked by double bombing," BBC News Online, 20 November 2003; Online source, accessed 15 April 2008: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3222608.stm.

group was able to continue carrying out operations due in large part to its cellular structure.[139]

When the integrity and independence of individual cells is strictly observed, such an organization is an effective method of avoiding detection. In the case of both the PIRA in Northern Ireland and Palestinian terrorist groups in the Occupied Territories, use of a cellular organization was initially effective against British and Israeli counterterrorist efforts. Clandestine cellular organizations will follow certain procedures that are common across different groups and operating areas. For example, terrorist cells will endeavour to blend in with their local ethnic community, and well trained cell members will find jobs and social networks outside the community as well. Individual cell members will avoid communicating with each other or their superiors, and then only through human courier or various electronic means that they hope are secure.[140] Finally, there will be few if any links or communication between different cells. The September 11th operatives exercised extremely effective operational security, to the extent that few of them made significant errors over the two years they spent in preparation.[141] Two members were reported to have requested flying lessons without asking for instruction on how to land, but this seems to be one of the only mistakes made by the Hamburg cell.

Members of well-trained cells will be specifically instructed to blend in with the surrounding community, dressing in contemporary clothes and displaying behaviour uncharacteristic of Muslim radicals, such as frequenting bars and even drinking

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[139] Cline, Lawrence E. "From Ocalan to Al Qaida: The Continuing Terrorist Threat in Turkey." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 27(4), 1 July 2004, 325.
[140] Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 76-7.
[141] Frederick Hitz, *The Great Game: The Myths and Reality of Espionage.* New York: Vintage Books. 2005. 160.

alcohol.[142] Training material found in one of the cells responsible for the African

embassy bombings of 1998 instructed readers on how to operate a cell 'behind enemy

lines.' These papers contained information on how to blend into Western societies,

create a false identity, communicate secretly, and even how to spread disinformation to

security agencies.[143] Such training material is available on the internet and easily

disseminated, though perfecting the techniques would take practice and discipline.

Support activities are critical to maintaining the operational capability of terror

groups, as sufficient support allows them to carry out complicated preparation as wells as

auxiliary activities designed to make detection increasingly difficult. Some sources

indicate that certain Islamist groups have created sophisticated intelligence networks that

use surveillance and human intelligence techniques on par with a professional

intelligence agency. For instance, terrorist agent handlers have managed to plant or

recruit operatives inside the political, military, and security establishments of Middle

Eastern and other states.[144] Furthermore, the attacks on the African embassies in 1998,

the U.S.S. Cole bombing, and the attacks of September 11th were preceded by years of

planning that included intelligence-gathering and reconnaissance of the targets.[145]

As a counterpoint to the evidence for a cellular organization, however, some

authors argue that there is evidence of the direct influence of the Al Qaeda leadership

cadre in the operations of certain cells and affiliates. Historically, bin Laden himself did

play a role in the planning of operations. According to testimony in the trial of those

accused of the 1998 African embassy bombings, bin Laden aided the planning process of

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[142] Jordan, "Al Qaeda and Western Islam," 3.
[143] Kitfield, "Osama's Learning Curve," 3506 – 3511.
[144] "Between Cheney and a Hard Place," *The Economist*, 3 March 2007, 48.
[145] Kim Cragin and Sara A. Daly. *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World.* Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation. 2004, 53.

the Nairobi operation, and other evidence suggests that he helped in planning both the U.S.S. Cole bombing and the attacks of September 11th, so he is both willing and able to participate in the planning process.[146] The testimony from the trial revealed that planning for the embassy bombings began up to five years beforehand. Such a methodical process that involves the input of experienced senior leadership figures should lead to an operation that is better planned and thus more deadly than a plan concocted quickly or without expert input. As long as there are areas of the world, such as Somalia and the Western region of Pakistan, that are effectively ungoverned by a central authority and difficult to infiltrate, experienced terrorists will be able to hide there while communicating instructions to groups throughout the world.[147] Indeed, some sources indicated that the members of a German cell arrested in 2007 were 'receiving direct orders' from individuals in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region on the timing of their attack.[148]

It is tempting to draw the conclusion that international Islamist terrorists have been crippled, since none have staged a large-scale attack in a democratic country since the attacks on Madrid in 2005. Yet this conclusion would be premature. Several writers have warned that Al Qaeda and its affiliates have demonstrated that their more experienced members are patient and determined, capable of meticulously planning and attacking only when assured of a relatively high probability of success.[149] Furthermore, the changes wrought in Islamist methodology since the fallout from September 11th have

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[146] Hoffman, "Lessons of 9/11." 11.
[147] "The Legacy of the Madrid Bombings." BBC Online. 15 February 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6357599.stm Accessed 31 October 2007.
[148] Corera, Gordon. "Al-Qaeda resurgent six years on?" BBC New Online. 11 September 2007. Online source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6988356.stm. Accessed 17 October 2007.
[149] Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, 233.

been due to the terrorists' willingness to learn both from their own mistakes and from the success of Western security agencies. Ian Lesser argued that much of security agencies' counterterrorist measures are in the public record, be it in media accounts and press releases or courtroom testimony, and that enterprising terrorists can therefore gain access to detailed information that enables them to institute better operational security.[150] An example of adaptation is the targeting of 'softer' targets such as housing complexes, night clubs, and commuter transit systems.[151] Though some have argued that this phenomenon is not an adaptation, but simply a factor of the terrorists' inability to plan and carry out attacks on 'harder' targets such as military bases,[152] in light of Islamist terrorists' other prescient reforms it is plausible that their choice of soft targets is a conscious decision to avoid attracting unwanted attention. Indeed, other analysts have called this trend alarming, as soft targets are so labelled because they are harder to protect, and attacks against them can be planned and carried out relatively quickly and easily.[153] Plots to attack soft targets are less likely to be caught by an intelligence agency that is busy monitoring terrorist traffic for signs of attacks on higher-value assets such as government buildings, military installations, and commercial interests in foreign countries.

Those dedicated terrorists who have learned these lessons will bide their time and ensure that their operations are well planned and undetected before carrying out an attack. Another explanation for the dearth of attacks on democratic countries is that other regions, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, are being targeted instead, particularly

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[150] Lesser, Ian O., et al. *Countering the New Terrorism*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 1999, 25.

151 Borum, R and M Gelles, 'Al-Qaeda's Operational Evolution: Behavioral and Organizational Perspectives', Behavioral Sciences and the Law, (2005), 23, 478.

[152] Abuza, Zachary. *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 2003, 168.

[153] Frantz, Douglas, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat." *The Los Angeles Times*. 26 September 2004.

as the deployed military forces and NGO's of liberal democratic countries and their allies present ideal targets. Radicalization continues throughout the Muslim world, but individuals who have become extremists in the years since the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq will have only begun to develop the skills and expertise necessary to carry out successful attacks across the world.[154]

The military and international judicial components of the struggle against Islamist terrorism have seen significant success. Many of those who were associated or partnered with bin Laden prior to September 11th have been killed or captured, and improved international cooperation as well as increased security spending have limited the capacity of terrorists to both transfer funds across borders and carry out coordinated transnational attacks. However, these gains have not necessarily limited the ability of free-standing terrorist cells, independently motivated by Islamist ideology, to raise funds and plan local or regional attacks. For progress to be made in this quarter, Western states must come up with improved methods of detecting and deterring such independent cells.[155] This is precisely the kind of counterterrorist application for which HUMINT operations have historically been particularly well suited, and the focus of this paper will now turn to the two examples where this has been the case.

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[154] Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, 167-9.
[155] Jason Burke, "Think Again: Al Qaeda," *Foreign Policy*, May-June 2004, 26.

Case Studies

Britain and Northern Irish Republican Terrorism

The purpose of this section is to outline the motivation, structure, and methodology of Northern Irish terrorism as well as the British response, to allow for comparison between this case and the current context of Islamist terrorism. In Northern Ireland the British national (MI5, Army Intelligence) and provincial (Royal Ulster Constabulary) security agencies were faced with a number of different terrorist groups, but the one that was most active, and most deadly, was the Provisional Irish Republican Army. The PIRA was ideologically different than modern Islamist terror groups, but the challenges these groups present to security agencies are very similar. As in the current context, PIRA volunteers did not normally fit a single profile, but rather came from various backgrounds, and most were young males.[156] One author even argued that the PIRA constituted a 'covert world' or movement rather than a secret army.[157] Indeed, not unlike Islamist terrorists today in radicalized Muslim communities, the PIRA could count on support and recruits from many Northern Irish Catholic communities. However, the group never managed to disseminate its ideas to the point that self-generating and self-supporting cells would develop: in the modern context, Islamist terrorists have taken advantage of modern media to do just this.

Many PIRA members were motivated by the desire to free Northern Ireland from what they saw as British occupation and protect the rights of the Catholic population from discrimination; others were motivated by the sheer desire to commit violence.

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[156] John Horgan and Max Taylor, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army: Command and Functional Structure," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 9(3), (Autumn 1997). 19.

[157] J. Bowyer Bell, *IRA Tactics and Targets*, Dublin: Poolbeg, 1990, 11.

Motivation, however, is the one enormous difference between the PIRA and modern

Islamists. Though the conflict in Northern Ireland in effect saw two religious groups

pitted against each other, the reasons for the conflict and the goals of the PIRA were

always political; at no time did religious terminology or symbolism form the basis for any

group's motivation in the Northern Irish conflict. One could make the argument that this

difference undermines any comparison between the PIRA and the current context, the

problem being that a group whose motivation includes religious values and ideals will

somehow be more dangerous; its members less likely to succumb to the various forms of

persuasion used to recruit informers, and better able to spot attempts to infiltrate the

group from the outside. There are modern examples, though, that demonstrate why even

fervent religious motivation is neither a barrier to recruitment of informers nor to

infiltration by agents; these will be dealt with in the final chapter.

The PIRA was initially organized along the lines of a British army unit, but

subsequently reorganized itself into a cellular structure in the late 1970s in response to

witheringly effective intelligence operations by the British security organizations, in

which entire PIRA units were captured on the evidence of a few informers.[158] In its

upper echelons the PIRA remained hierarchical, with a fairly rigid command structure,

but below the executive level the PIRA broke up its units into individual cells, known as

Active Service Units, apparently loosely modelled on the practices of the Red Army

Faction and the Red Brigades.[159] Each ASU consisted of four 'soldiers' plus a leader;

each soldier would have a specialization, allowing the ASU to remain versatile.[160] As

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[158] Raymond Gilmour, *Dead Ground: Infiltrating the IRA,* London: Warner Books, 1998. 105.
[159] Kiran Sarma, "Informers and the Battle Against Republican Terrorism: A Review of 30 Years of Conflict," *Police Practice and Research*, 6(2), May 2005, 170-71.
[160] Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA: A History*, Niwot, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994, 356.

their awareness of the risks of infiltrators and informers grew, the PIRA began instituting

further security measures such as the use of cover names and disguises within ASUs;

weapons and ammunition dumps were kept secret and arms were distributed only before

an attack; ASUs were encouraged to operate outside their own areas; and only single

channels of communication were maintained between the different levels of command.[161]

Even the cellular structure had its weaknesses, though. For example, an informer or

agent in the upper echelons of the group could still do significantly more damage than

one in the lower ranks.[162] The RUC Special Branch even managed at one point to recruit

one of the senior members of the PIRA's own internal security group.[163] Furthermore,

the PIRA could never be considered a truly professional force, and lack of training or an

established code of discipline (other than for serious crimes) meant that even elite ASUs

adhered to the cellular structure inexpertly.[164] Compounding the lack of 'professional'

terrorist training was the close-knit nature of Irish Catholic communities: even when

secrecy was being adhered to, casual contacts between community members and the

PIRA would often lead to the discovery of common acquaintances, and ultimately

relationships would develop that would be exploited by security agents.[165] During the

hunger strikes in the 1980s, ASU members wanted to show solidarity with the strikers

and many took part in public marches: careful monitoring by security agencies meant that

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[161] Horgan and Taylor, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army," 5-8, 22; Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, London: Heinemann, 1987, 256; Coogan, *The IRA: A History*, 357.
[162] Bradley W. C. Bamford, "The Role and Effectiveness of Intelligence in Northern Ireland." *Intelligence and National Security,* 20(4), (December 2005). 586.
[163] Tony Geraghty, *The Irish War: The Hidden Conflict Between the IRA and British Intelligence,* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998. 157.
[164] Eamon Collins, *Killing Rage*, London: Granta Books, 1997, 83.
[165] Kevin Kelley, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland and the IRA*, Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1983, 285.

many of these individuals were identified.[166] Also, the PIRA had many people in support

roles, finding and hiding weapons, raising money, and providing safe-houses for

operational members; these individuals were also exploited as sources of information on

active group members.[167]

Furthermore, the restructuring into a cellular network may have made the PIRA less

dangerous, though this is difficult to measure. For instance, the group's central

leadership was unable to monitor each cell's activities or pass orders down effectively.

This makes conducting a coordinated campaign, and certainly carrying out spectacular

attacks that require the coordination of multiple cells, virtually impossible.[168] Indeed,

some ASUs did not adhere to the cellular model in order to maintain the viability of their

offensive capability.[169] Furthermore, the group's ability to learn was hampered by its

new cellular structure, because by its nature it precluded the sharing of information; in an

effort to counteract this deficiency, individual ASUs were sometimes encouraged to

experiment with new tactics and methods, though this was an obvious stop-gap

measure.[170]

Nonetheless, a campaign of low-level violence conducted by multiple separate cells

will be just as effective in achieving the goals of a terrorist or insurgent group if the cells

cannot be subverted and the violence stopped. Despite its shortcomings, the PIRA was a

formidable enemy, and when assessed against a range of measures, the adoption of a

cellular structure was effective in improving security and reducing the number of arrests

[166] Peter Taylor, *Behind the Mask: The IRA and Sinn Fein,* New York: TV Books, 1997, 299.
[167] Horgan and Taylor, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army," 3.
[168] Bell, *IRA Tactics and Targets*, 5, 107.
[169] Sarma, "Informers and the Battle Against Republican Terrorism," 170.
[170] Jackson, BA, Baker, JC, Cragin, K, et al. *Aptitude for Destruction: Organizational Learning in Terrorist Groups and Its Implications for Combating Terrorism, Vol 1*. Santa Monica, California: RAND. 2000, 135.

of group members.[171] Even as late as 1992, despite extensive infiltration and numerous

setbacks for the PIRA during the 1970s and 1980s, the General Officer Commanding

British Forces in Northern Ireland, General Sir John Wilsey, warned that the group's

leaders were dynamic and inventive and that its units were still capable of carrying out

'brilliant' attacks.[172] Some enterprising members of the PIRA understood how important

it was to have accurate intelligence on the opposition. Former PIRA member Eamon

Collins writes of building character profiles of RUC officers and soldiers, information

that was gleaned from normal conversations with various people.[173]

The PIRA continually learned from its mistakes and concocted new ways to

overcome the security agencies' countermeasures. One effect of increased infiltration

and subversion of ASUs was that individual units were allowed greater autonomy in

selecting targets and methods of attack.[174] This necessarily limited communication

between units and the command echelons and therefore reduced security risks. Another

method of increasing security was to train members to withstand interrogation

techniques, which was effective when properly taught and practiced: interrogators who

adhered to humanitarian law had no recourse to a prisoner's right to silence.[175] In an

effort to maintain secrecy, the PIRA would label its compromised members 'red lights'.

These were individuals who were known to the security forces and would therefore

attract attention wherever they went. Other self-preserving terrorists would refuse to

work with them on secret operations, maintaining their cover.[176]

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[171] Jackson, et al, *Aptitude for Destruction*, 130; M. L. R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Republican Movement*, New York, Routledge, 1997, 145.
[172] Ian O. Lesser, *Countering the New Terrorism*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999, 26.
[173] Collins, *Killing Rage*, 16-17.
[174] Horgan and Taylor, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army," 23.
[175] Gilmour, *Dead Ground,* 353-4; Collins, *Killing Rage,* 84.
[176] Collins, *Killing Rage*, 82.

However, despite the efforts of the PIRA to both avoid detection and minimize the damage in the event of infiltration or the subversion of group members, British security agencies were very effective at subverting its operations. Although the RUC was apparently the most effective of those agencies operating against the PIRA, by the mid-1990s there were dozens of informers and multiple agents at work within the group.[177] Although judicial blunders and technicalities allowed a number of violent terrorists to walk free, many were later imprisoned or were killed by their Protestant terrorist rivals after being identified in trial.[178] The PIRA's security measures were overcome by intelligence agents' determined efforts, the criminal habits of the group's members, and the sheer inexperience of PIRA members in maintaining operational security. For instance, in addition to the subversion of high-ranking group members, and the sometimes amateurish behaviour of even experienced terrorists, some units in areas of dense Catholic population felt secure enough to continue operating as army units long into the 1980s.[179]

One estimate of intelligence collection in Northern Ireland claims that over two-thirds was collected via HUMINT.[180] Methods of obtaining covert HUMINT about a terrorist organization fall into two categories, and both were used in Northern Ireland. The first is the use of informers, people who are already members of the target organization and can be subverted: convinced to work for a security organization, normally by passing on information about the group's activities. Informers were either voluntary walk-ins, or group members who were either pursuing a personal agenda or had

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[177] Keith Maguire, "The Intelligence War in Northern Ireland," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence*, 4(2), (Summer 1990), 158.
[178] Gilmour, *Dead Ground*, 355.
[179] Collins, *Killing Rage*, 83.
[180] Bamford, "The Role and Effectiveness of Intelligence in Northern Ireland," 591.

been coerced into cooperating; coercion was the most common method used by the security agencies in Northern Ireland.[181] Well-placed informers were able to give security agencies very specific information about terrorist operations, such as who participated, the equipment they used and how they used it, where they had hidden before an operation and how they had exfiltrated from the area of the attack.[182] Many informers in the PIRA remained in place for years, passing information that was used primarily to foil attacks and save lives, though often the intelligence gleaned from these sources was used to make arrests and press charges.[183] The second category of covert HUMINT, that of training and infiltrating agents into an organization from the outside, was used infrequently against the PIRA due to the significant problems that outsiders had penetrating the wall of suspicion pervading Northern Irish Catholic communities.

Considering the deep stigma associated with 'informers' in Ireland, it may be surprising that so many members of the PIRA were convinced to collaborate with security agencies. However most informers in the PIRA did not become so voluntarily but were rather forced to cooperate through various forms of pressure and incentive.[184] Before approaching anyone as a possible source of covert information, as much information as possible would be collected about the individual in order to discern what methods would be most effective to induce them to cooperate.[185] Using this type of knowledge to disarm the individual, an agent-handler would then try to convince the person that he or she is on the wrong side and can do more good working for the

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[181] Horgan and Taylor, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army," 41.

[182] Toby Harnden, *'Bandit Country': The IRA and South Armagh*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999, 40.

[183] Taylor, *Behind the Mask*, 299.

[184] Steven Greer, *Supergrasses: A Study in Anti-Terrorist Law Enforcement in Northern Ireland*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995,42.

[185] Martin Ingram and Greg Harkin, *Stakeknife: Britain's Secret Agents in Ireland*, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, 35-6.

police.[186] Alternatively, security agents might use threats of prosecution or deportation to coerce someone to work for them. Petty crime was often a precursor to joining the PIRA, and criminal records were used as a means of leverage against group members to coerce them into cooperating against their former comrades. This tactic was normally used on young men, who would be arrested for a petty crime and either given a warning and let go, to be possibly recruited at some later date, or immediately offered amnesty in exchange for cooperation.[187] One of the most effective informers ever used by British intelligence agencies was recruited simply by threatening him with deportation to the Republic of Ireland; disinclined to uproot his family from Northern Ireland, he agreed to cooperate.[188] However, one author who had been a security officer responsible for running agents cites greed as the most common motivating factor for informers, and the most effective type of coercion in use by security agencies.[189] Although this method amounted to little better than bribery or blackmail, and has received much criticism from various sources, the effectiveness of informers recruited using monetary incentive is testament to the method's value.

Infiltrating the PIRA from the outside had mixed success, primarily because of the close-knit nature of Irish Catholic society that precluded outsiders from blending in easily. Any newcomer arriving in a Northern Irish Catholic community during the Troubles was treated with suspicion, and thus even intelligence agents who were recruited from other Irish communities risked detection and death.[190] Furthermore the

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[186] Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War Against the IRA*, London: Bloomsbury, 2001, 151.
[187] Gilmour, *Dead Ground,* 59.
[188] Geraghty, *The Irish War,* 151.
[189] Ingram and Harkin, *Stakeknife: Britain's Secret Agents in Ireland*, 37.
[190] Mark L. Bowlin, "British Intelligence and the IRA: The Secret War in Northern Ireland, 1969-1988," Master's Thesis, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 1990, 36, 100-101.

PIRA was aware of the risks posed by infiltrators, and its own counter-intelligence branch would sometimes conduct background checks on new recruits.[191] For this reason the recruitment of infiltrating agents from the local population was much more productive, and the local police intelligence units tended to have more success in this respect than their national counterparts. The Royal Ulster Constabulary Special Branch was very effective at running agents inside the PIRA, arguably because of its ultra-secret operations and cultural sensitivity due to the similarities its officers held with the target population.[192] Thus in addition to informers recruited from within the PIRA's ranks, sometimes "the security forces managed to recruit young Catholic males in their early teens and persuade them to join the PIRA."[193] The only well-documented case, Raymond Gilmour, who was one of the most significant infiltrators to testify in the 'supergrass' trials, infiltrated both the Irish National Liberation Army and the PIRA from the outside and spent five years undercover (Gilmour had been initially coerced into joining the INLA due to a petty crime record).[194]

Not only was infiltration and subversion useful in catching terrorists and subverting their activities, but the success of these methods undermined the confidence of the remaining terrorists. After the initial success of the 'supergrass' trials, the PIRA became very paranoid of anyone who had been detained by the security forces. Any group member who was arrested and released without being sentenced, even if he was innocent of collusion with the security agencies, was considered suspicious.[195] Done improperly, the running of an agent inside a terrorist group can have grave consequences. If an

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[191] Gilmour, *Dead Ground*, 117.
[192] Maguire, "The Intelligence War in Northern Ireland," 157.
[193] Bamford, "The Role and Effectiveness of Intelligence in Northern Ireland," 592.
[194] Gilmour, *Dead Ground*.
[195] Collins, *Killing Rage*, 200.

informer is discovered he may be killed or, worse, coerced into acting as a triple-agent, so to speak, passing information to the terrorists on the activities of security agencies that can then be used to carry out very effective attacks or undermine intelligence-gathering operations. The PIRA killed dozens of people from the 1970s to the early 1990s who had been suspected of being informers for the security services. Although many had been informers, sometimes rumours and hearsay were all that was required to have someone executed, and many PIRA members who had not cooperated with security agencies were erroneously accused and executed.[196]

Because of the deadly risks associated with exposure, most informers in the PIRA had a limited life span as effective sources of intelligence, after which most would either compromise themselves, become compromised when security agencies had to act on intelligence they had received but which obviously implicated the informer, or fell victim to the PIRA's own counter-intelligence measures.[197]

One aspect of the use of informers in Northern Ireland that was unpalatable to the public was the acceptance of a certain level of criminality in those who had been recruited to spy for security agencies. In some instances informers were permitted to continue carrying out violent and even deadly crimes, behaviour which obviously ran counter to the purposes of the security agencies involved. A certain degree of criminality is a necessary evil that must be accepted in order for a HUMINT program using informers to be effective, but there must be guidelines and regulations regarding the level and type of criminal activity that will be accepted. Lapses or deliberate circumvention of their own regulations led all British security agencies in Northern Ireland into trouble

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[196] Harnden, *'Bandit Country'*, 86.
[197] Martin Dillon, *The Dirty War: Covert Strategies and Tactics Used in Political Conflicts*, New York: Routledge, 1990, 346.

with the European Commission of Human Rights and, more damagingly for their counterterrorist campaigns, the British public.

There is another form of HUMINT that was used effectively in Northern Ireland that has received much less study: open-source intelligence gathered by soldiers and policemen from the public while on patrol. This type of low-grade intelligence, if collected in sufficient quantity, can offset the absence of high-grade intelligence from well-placed informers, or complement and clarify covert intelligence. Being able to spot abnormal behaviour or situations, based on familiarity with community norms and routines, can lead to the apprehension of terrorists or the thwarting of attacks. Debriefings after each foot patrol, combined with accurate piecing-together of information from multiple sources, facilitated the creation of an intelligence product that was useful to all concerned (rather than superfluous).[198]

One obvious obstacle to the gathering of low-grade intelligence is the reluctance of the local population to cooperate with any security agencies. This was particularly a problem in Catholic Northern Ireland where there was a pervasive attitude of suspicion toward the British security agencies, due at least in part to Britain's early mis-handling of the crisis. Furthermore the PIRA was not squeamish about carrying out violent reprisals against civilians who cooperated with the police or army.[199] In some parts of Northern Ireland the general public was effective in providing low-grade intelligence. However, the public had to be willing to help, and the daily behaviour of soldiers and police

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[198] Jackson, "Counterinsurgency Intelligence in a 'Long War': The British Experience in Northern Ireland," *Military Review*, January-February 2007, 77-8.
[199] Harnden, *'Bandit Country'*, 41.

officers made all the difference in the public attitude towards helping security agencies.[200]

Low-grade intelligence that has been gathered on an individual of interest will also be useful in the event that the person will be recruited as an informer[201]: as mentioned above, having as much information about a person as possible was critical in maintaining an advantage over a possible source during recruitment, something which will be demonstrated in the Israeli case as well.

Over the course of its existence, the PIRA was occasionally crippled by the security agencies' use of informers. Using the HUMINT acquired from informers, PIRA operations were thwarted, its members arrested or killed and its weapons confiscated. The knowledge that anyone could turn into an informer for security agencies, combined with the damage that the effective use of their intelligence could do, created paranoia within the PIRA and further reduced its efficiency.[202]

There are warnings to take from the Northern Irish context for security agencies using informers, primarily regarding the use of informers as sources of testimony in convicting terrorists. In Northern Ireland informers nicknamed 'supergrasses' were offered immunity from prosecution or a lighter sentence as well as protection afterwards, in return for helping the police convict their former comrades. Because of the unreliability of these individuals, though, and the fact that many charges were laid only on the basis of one person's testimony, many of those charged in 'supergrass' trials were set free.[203] Informers were used very effectively in Northern Ireland to thwart attacks

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[200] Jackson, "Counterinsurgency Intelligence," 79.
[201] Ingram and Harkin, *Stakeknife*, 35-6.
[202] Sarma, "Informers and the Battle Against Republican Terrorism," 177.
[203] Taylor, *Behind the Mask*, 309.

and thereby save lives; but their record as witnesses was abysmal, and in the fallout from the 'supergrass' trials many of them were assassinated since their identities had been revealed. Despite these problems, the British experience in Northern Ireland offers good examples of the effective use of both covert and overt HUMINT against a determined and dangerous terrorist group.

Israel and Palestinian Terrorism

Israel's security intelligence and defence intelligence services are some of the most famous in the world, with stunning successes throughout the country's history. They have conducted counterterrorist operations across the world as well as in the territories occupied by Israel. Israel's intelligence campaign against Palestinian terrorism has been ongoing for many years, and has overcome multiple challenges over its course. Initially faced with infiltrating networks of ethnically and linguistically distinct terrorist groups, Israel's security services were also faced with the internationalization of Palestinian terrorism and ultimately the use of suicide bombers as weapons; all of these threats were met and eventually overcome or subdued. It is accepted knowledge in the intelligence community that the infiltration of each and every cell of a terrorist group with agents or informers is realistically impossible, because of the group's extremist and sometimes fanatical religious nature or effective compartmentalization of the group's cells.[204] By all accounts, Israel's security services have come as close to the complete infiltration of the terrorist organizations they targeted as any agencies in the world.

Israel was faced with a serious Palestinian terrorist threat only after it seized the territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the six day war of 1967. In the Palestinian

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[204] Shlomo Gazit, in *Combating Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries*, edited by Yonah Alexander, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

terrorist threat, just as liberal democratic security agencies currently, Israel's security agencies were faced with groups of terrorists that could recruit from a large population of people who were ethnically, culturally, and linguistically distinct enough from Israelis that infiltration was initially difficult based on the human resources available at the time.[205] The demography of the West Bank and Gaza allowed the terror groups based there to operate clandestinely and separately. Since 1967 Israel's security services have found volunteers within their own population who were ethnically similar enough to Palestinians to infiltrate their terror groups, and have built networks of informers spanning multiple groups in both territories. Other advantages for the terrorists, however, have carried over into the modern context. The occupied territories' topography is well-known to terrorists, many of whom know which pathways are not monitored by Israeli security agencies. Furthermore, the short distances between Palestinian towns and settlements allows for relatively easy and speedy communication that does not require the use of vulnerable electronic means.[206] HUMINT has therefore been one of Israel's key sources of intelligence in its campaigns against Palestinian terror groups, and the methods used by Israeli agencies are eminently transferable to Islamist extremist counterterrorism.

Just as liberal democratic states' security intelligence agencies are currently faced with building or expanding HUMINT resources after a period of neglect, after occupying the Palestinian territories Israel was faced with developing its HUMINT resources essentially from scratch, and Shin Bet[207] was initially unprepared for the magnitude of the task required. Although Shin Bet employed significant numbers of Arab speakers

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[205] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars,* 238.

[206] David Eshel, "Israel Hones Intelligence Operations to Counter Intifada," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 October 2002.

[207] Shin Bet is Israel's domestic security agency; also known as Shabak, it shares responsibility with Israel's military intelligence agency for collecting intelligence in the Occupied Territories.

before 1967, this group was only sufficient to deal with HUMINT assets inside Israel, where the Arab population was relatively small. However, shortly before 1967 Israel had given its Arab population more freedom by abolishing the military administration of Arab towns. When this change was carried out Shin Bet established a network of informers among Israeli Arabs in an attempt to ensure that they would not establish a 'fifth column'. The experience Shin Bet gained from this operation was used to create an informer network in the territories seized in 1967.[208]

Fortunately for Israel, the Palestinians who decided to engage in terrorism and militancy after the 1967 war were equally unprepared for the struggle and remained vulnerable for several years after the occupation began. Fatah, the largest Palestinian militant group, was initially totally inexperienced and failed to conduct rudimentary operational security. The organization was organized into large groups, did not compartmentalize its operational units and allowed militants from multiple units to socialize and interact.[209] Without even being infiltrated by security forces its members were easily apprehended in large numbers, often based solely on Shin Bet's observation of their movements and suspicious activities. Indeed, during the early years of the Israeli occupation Palestinian terrorists generally were monitored from the moment they were recruited and began moving in new social circles, and very few escaped surveillance by Israeli security agents.[210] Before Palestinian terrorists began to learn the need for internal security, a single terrorist could lead the security services to the apprehension of large

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[208] Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, *Every Spy a Prince: The Complete History of Israel's Intelligence Community*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990, 169.
[209] Raviv and Melman, *Every Spy a Prince*, 171.
[210] Ibid., 241, 244-5.

groups of his compatriots.[211] Informants were sometimes able to give extremely detailed

information regarding a group's capabilities and the location of its members, as well as

the targets and timings of terrorist attacks, information which directly saved the lives of

Israelis.[212]

This state of affairs seems to have largely obviated the need for Israeli security

agencies to infiltrate Palestinian terror groups using trained agents in the early years of

the occupation. In later years, and particularly recently, Palestinian terror groups learned

the need for improved security and undertook measures to avoid infiltration or

observation by Israeli security services. They learned these lessons through hard-earned

experience, and the resulting countermeasures are sometimes quite brutal, including the

torture and execution of suspected informers.

Israel's successful counterterrorist strategies coupled with the heavy security

presence within Israel led Palestinian terrorists to attack softer targets abroad,

predominantly in Western Europe. Palestinians carried out attacks such as hijacking

Israeli flights from other countries, assassinating Israelis abroad who were real or

suspected security agents, and targeting Israeli embassies with letter bombs and open

attacks. In their counterterrorist operations abroad, Israel's security services were able

achieve repeated successes, but at much higher costs in financial and human resources.

In order to achieve success abroad, Israeli security services needed particularly detailed

and timely intelligence, as Palestinian terrorists abroad consisted of smaller and well-

organized groups, some of whom enjoyed support from Arab states. Despite the fact that

Palestinian terror groups were carrying out their operations in other countries, most

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[211] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars,* 256-258.

[212] Seth Jones, "Fighting Networked Terrorist Groups: Lessons from Israel." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 30(4), 2007, 296.

groups still recruited their members from people living in the occupied territories.

Israel's existing network of informers therefore proved invaluable: informers recruited in

the territories were simply allowed to join missions abroad, where they continued to feed

Israeli security agents actionable intelligence.[213] Israel's foreign intelligence service,

Mossad, infiltrated the Palestinian Liberation Organization so effectively with well-

placed informers and agents that they were better able to warn Jordan of the intentions of

Palestinian terrorists based there than were the Jordanian services themselves.[214]

At the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987 the Israeli security intelligence services

were in disarray, with agencies sniping at each other. The Israeli Defence Forces'

intelligence service, AMAN, which had hitherto carried out HUMINT operations

successfully in foreign countries, claimed it was bogged down trying simply to maintain

peace and order in the occupied territories. It took Israelis several weeks to recognize the

intifada as a significantly different phenomenon than previous Palestinian violence –

particularly because of the lack of coordination within the popular resistance.[215] In this

way, the first intifada was a serious departure from previous terrorist activity. The PLO

was not passing orders to the smaller organizations involved, nor orchestrating their

actions or operating procedures. The intifada became a self-perpetuating movement

because of the widespread popular feelings of Palestinians coupled with the rhetoric of

organizations like Hamas and Fatah, and was facilitated by the widespread dissemination

of expertise on how to carry out attacks on Israeli security forces.[216] By early 1990 the

intifada was losing momentum, in large part because of the PLO's loss of credibility as a

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[213] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars,* 280.
[214] Ronald Payne, *Mossad: Israel's Most Secret Service*, London: Bantam Press, 1990, 73.
[215] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 464-5.
[216] Ibid., 481.

consequence of its mishandling of political gains, as well as the extensive economic and human sacrifices suffered by Palestinians. Shin Bet had by then proven, however, that it was still able to subdue Palestinian resistance and that its methodology with respect to the use of collaborators and informers was sound and effective.[217] The 1987 intifada saw the first instances of Shin Bet operators accompanying IDF patrols, with an informer in tow, in order to help the IDF find who they were looking for and conduct successful interrogations.[218]

When, in 1994, the IDF pulled out of areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, Shin Bet no longer had direct contact with their Palestinian agents or informers in those areas, and this could have been a critical deficiency with the outbreak of the second, or Al-Aqsa intifada, which broke out in 2000. However, having learned the value of informers and collaborators, Shin Bet quickly re-established its HUMINT network at the outbreak of the second intifada, a task made easier by the personnel still in Shin Bet who had operated as agent handlers before, and the fact that in 2000 many of their former charges were still alive and moving in the same terrorist social circles.[219] At the outbreak of the second intifada Israel's security and intelligence services, particularly the IDF, began reforming their doctrine and force structure in order better to combat the low-level insurgency that characterized this second wave of popular resistance. While Shin Bet had been running intelligence-driven counter-terrorist operations for years, the IDF had to learn how to do this very quickly, as its units were becoming engaged in close urban combat in Palestinian cities. The importance of having HUMINT sources was

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[217] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 496.
[218] Joost R Hiltermann, "Israel's Strategy to Break the Uprising," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* 19(2), (Winter 1990), 96.
[219] David Eshel, "Israel Hones Intelligence Operations to Counter Intifada." *Jane's Intelligence Review*. 1 October 2002. Online source: www.janes.com. Accessed 19 February 2008.

emphasized when Israeli signals intelligence units listening in to Palestinian phone and radio transmissions found that although they could easily understand the language, they had insufficient experience with local dialects to understand slang terms, something which initially hindered the effective exploitation of SIGINT.[220] The two agencies have now come to work quite closely together, with the IDF at times acting effectively as Shin Bet's operational arm.[221]

During the second intifada the IDF was playing a critical role in counterterrorism as well as quelling insurgent activity. In order to facilitate the level of intelligence processing needed to ensure mission success against Palestinian terror groups, the Field Intelligence Corps was established in April 2000. It is an IDF collection agency to which combat intelligence units report directly, allowing real-time production of intelligence for local commanders.[222] Israel's counter-terrorism strategy during the second intifada was so effective that it reduced the incidence of suicide bombings in Israel from a height of sixteen per month to almost none within a period of months. Bruce Hoffman credits Israel's physical occupation of the Palestinian territories for this success. Having troops manning checkpoints, enforcing curfews, and carrying out arrests was instrumental not only in providing physical security but in allowing Shin Bet to operate in the territories with a great deal more freedom than it would have otherwise enjoyed.[223]

Throughout their counterterrorist operations, Shin Bet, Mossad, and Israeli military intelligence have relied primarily on the recruitment of significant numbers of informers

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[220] Clive Jones, "'One Size Fits All': Israel, Intelligence, and the al-Aqsa Intifada," 276-7.
[221] Alon Ben-David, "Israel's Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine, Inner Conflict," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 1 Sept 2004, Online source: www8.janes.com, Accessed 8 March 2007
[222] David Eshel, "Israel Hones Intelligence Operations to Counter Intifada," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 October 2002, Online source: www.janes.com. Accessed 19 February 2008.
[223] Bruce Hoffman, "The logic of suicide terrorism," *Atlantic Monthly*, 291(5), June 2003, 45.

within terrorist groups, rather than the use of trained agents to infiltrate individual groups

and cells. Though Israel can call on people who can pass as Palestinian and either

infiltrate groups or act as low-grade intelligence collectors in the occupied territories, the

use of informers was far more cost-effective. In any case, infiltration of Palestinian terror

groups was not even really necessary: Palestinian society is so close-knit and criss-

crossed with clan allegiances that it was difficult for terror groups to compartmentalize

even a single cell, much less the relatively large groups in which Palestinian terrorists

initially tended to operate. Israeli security agencies have successfully played on the

rivalries that exist between Palestinian clans or tribes, and between secularists and

fundamentalists.[224] Despite later increases in operational security and

compartmentalization, not to mention the creation of their own counter-intelligence units,

Palestinian groups were constantly threatened with the possibility that terrorists captured

by the Israelis would become informers after being released.

Critical to increasing the Palestinian militants' anxiety was keeping the identity of

informers and collaborators secret for as long as possible so that militants and terrorists

never knew whom they could trust.[225] Once a terrorist group learns that informers have

infiltrated its ranks, its members become suspicious of each other and hesitant to carry

out operations, even after the actual infiltrator has been caught or withdrawn by the

intelligence agency.[226] The number of Palestinians killed by their own people during the

intifadas on suspicion of collaborating is arguably a mark of the effectiveness of Israeli

HUMINT infiltration. Exactly how many of those killed were actually informers will not

be disclosed in the near future, and at least some of them were murdered to settle

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[224] Gershom Gorenberg, "The Collaborator," *New York Times*, 18 Aug 2002, 34.
[225] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 255.
[226] Gorenberg, "The Collaborator."

personal disputes, but the fact that Palestinian terror groups were willing to kill hundreds of their own members and fellow citizens at a time when they needed as much support as they could get indicates that the level of suspicion amongst them was high.

As in Ireland, there is a great stigma amongst Palestinians surrounding those who collaborate with Israelis. If found out or even suspected of collaborating, Palestinians face severe punishment or death, and during the first intifada that began at the end of the 1980s, a number of Palestinians were killed by their own people on suspicion of having collaborated with the Israelis.[227] However, despite this and the adoption by Palestinian terrorists of a cellular structure (as in Ireland, this was often adhered to only sporadically), Shin Bet was still able to subvert their activities. This was arguably because Shin Bet's network of informers, established and maintained over the years since 1967, was relatively intact, due in large part to the sheer number of informers recruited.[228] Shin Bet had thousands of informers in the Occupied Territories, from labourers to university intellectuals. Ideally these informers would give Shin Bet not only information on planned violent or criminal activity, but would also warn of attempts to organize political violence.[229]

Israeli security intelligence services have at their disposal various methods of enticing a Palestinian to work for them, some of which make the Israelis unique among practitioners of HUMINT, primarily because of their physical occupation of the territory in which targeted terrorist groups are operating. Israel has been in an advantageous position due to its long-term occupation of the Palestinian territories. The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories turned what had been a foreign threat into an

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[227] Gorenberg, "The Collaborator," 35.
[228] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 495.
[229] Raviv and Melman, *Every Spy a Prince*, 382.

issue of domestic security. Because Israel has maintained physical control of Palestinian terrorists' staging areas and home bases, it has been possible for Israel to treat the terrorists as criminals, apprehending and imprisoning them, while also maintaining the option of using military force. Its physical proximity to the terrorist threat means that Israel can move terrorists quickly from capture to interrogation, giving the individuals little time to prepare, making them more vulnerable to interrogation methods.[230] As an occupying force Israel is able to control the movement of Palestinians within their own territory using roadblocks and checkpoints, which are a very effective method of catching militants and terrorists transporting weapons and explosives, and even suicide bombers. Israel's proximity to the Palestinians, combined with its enormous lead in economic and industrial development, give Israeli security services another avenue through which to pressure potential Palestinian informers. Many Palestinians rely on jobs inside Israel for their livelihood, and medical treatment in Israeli hospitals is often sought-after or necessary in the face of comparatively primitive and over-tasked Palestinian healthcare services. There are multiple instances in which Israeli security agencies have secured cooperation from militants and terrorists using promises of medical treatment and permits to work in Israel or travel outside the Palestinian territories. Finally, Israel's security services have also demonstrated the usefulness of exploiting greed, as monetary rewards were frequently used to great effect.

As in Northern Ireland, IDF foot-soldiers on patrol in the occupied territories have become low-grade HUMINT collectors, and with the addition of intelligence personnel at the tactical level to process intelligence and interrogate militants close to the point of

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[230] Ephraim Kahana, "HUMINT vs. Terrorism: The Israeli Case." Paper presented at the 47th Annual International Studies Association Convention on North-South Divide and International Studies, March 22-25 2006, San Diego, California.

capture, IDF units have proven very successful at collecting real-time actionable intelligence and reacting to it quickly, a method used extensively in the quelling of militant activity during the second intifada.[231] In this context, Shin Bet operatives were extremely effective at collecting high-grade intelligence from HUMINT sources when they had good background information on potential informers. Shin Bet officers accompanying IDF patrols would normally be able to speak Arabic without an accent, and would sometimes appear Arab themselves. Combined with good background knowledge of an individual, this was very disarming to potential informers and frequently led to the collection of a plethora of information from one overwhelmed source.[232]

Assuming trained personnel were available, intelligence officers conducted interrogations immediately or soon after an enemy was taken prisoner in an effort to locate nearby improvised explosive devices, ambushes, and weapon caches.[233] Unlike in other liberal-democratic countries, Israel has few domestic legal obstacles to hinder it from transporting such individuals to prisons inside its borders without charging them, after which interrogation, recruitment, and release of informers can take place quickly and efficiently. Israel does not use the death penalty for captured Palestinians, due to the rationale that a terrorist or militant who knows he will be killed if captured will fight harder.[234] Instead of being executed, thousands of accused or convicted Palestinian terrorists sit in Israeli jails. The recruitment of collaborators is often carried out in Israeli prisons where militants and terrorists are given pardons or reduced sentences for

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[231] Jones, "Fighting Networked Terrorist Groups," 297.
[232] Hoffman, "The logic of suicide terrorism," 45.
[233] David Eshel, "Israel Hones Intelligence Operations to Counter Intifada."
[234] Raviv and Melman, *Every Spy a Prince*, 385.

cooperating or divulging information.[235] In Israel prison recruitment has been a very

effective method of rapidly building a network of informers. Shin Bet recruited heavily

from arrested Palestinians at the outbreak of the first intifada, sometimes using

entrapment to induce petty criminals to become collaborators.[236]

   Eventually some Palestinian terror groups recognized the danger of working with

their compatriots who had been released from Israeli prisons, and the usefulness of

informers recruited in this way was often quite short. Furthermore, there are some

disadvantages to having large numbers of terrorists sitting together in jail. Many of those

Palestinians released from prison had learned or improved their skills while in jail,

learning from their compatriots methods for evading capture and resisting interrogation,

in addition to new and different ways to carry out attacks.[237]

   An intimate knowledge and understanding of Palestinians' culture and society has

been crucial to the Israelis' success. However, there is at least some evidence that Israeli

security services have had some difficulty infiltrating religious extremist groups, such as

Hamas, with HUMINT assets.[238] This is due partly to their relatively small size and the

insular nature of Palestinian society in Gaza, Hamas' base of power, but is due also to the

difficulty of convincing religious zealots to abandon their convictions and inform on their

compatriots. There is no evidence that Israel has tried other methods of recruiting

members of such organizations, but recently other Middle Eastern countries such as

Yemen and Saudi Arabia have used Muslim religious scholars to reform Islamist

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[235] Joost R. Hiltermann, "Israel's Strategy to Break the Uprising," 94-5; Clive Jones, "One Size Fits All," 276.
[236] Salim Tamari, "Eyeless in Judea: Israel's Strategy of Collaborators and Forgeries." *Middle East Report*, 164/165, (May-Aug 1990). 40.
[237] Raviv and Melman, *Every Spy a Prince*, 385
[238] Raviv and Melman, *Every Spy a Prince*, 385-6.

terrorists, and this may have an application with respect to the recruitment of informers in Islamist terrorist groups. This possibility will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Having learned its lessons over the course of decades, Israel is now extremely well suited to conduct intelligence-driven counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. In order to be effective, IDF soldiers operating in the occupied territories require that intelligence be relayed extremely quickly, since circumstances sometimes allow only seconds to respond to potential threats or opportunities.[239] Critical to the Israelis' success is the sharing between agencies of intelligence derived from HUMINT sources. Intelligence products from multiple sources are quickly cross-referenced against each other to corroborate information and allow speedy target acquisition.[240] The best example of this type of sharing of resources are the above-mentioned instances in which informers have accompanied IDF patrols into the territories. This is a stark contrast with some Western intelligence agencies, who jealously guarded their HUMINT sources from each other for fear that their counterparts would accidentally slip the identity of informers to the opposition, ending the source's value. This was the case in Northern Ireland, where the RUC would hide its informers from British military intelligence, until sufficient confidence was built between agencies and a system was established by which intelligence could be shared.

During large IDF operations inside the Palestinian territories today, Shin Bet's control centre is shared between Shin Bet's HUMINT agents, IDF Imagery Intelligence officers, as well as Israeli Air Force and IDF Special Forces liaison officers. These joint intelligence operation centres have been in use by the IDF since the 1990s but during the

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[239] Jones, "Fighting Networked Terrorist Groups," 285.
[240] Ibid., 297.

second Intifada these were perfected into sophisticated command, control, communications, computer and intelligence (C4I) centres.[241]

The Israelis' inability or unwillingness to win a hearts and minds campaign has led to the strategic and political failure of their otherwise highly effective counterterrorist campaign in the Palestinian territories.[242] In he early years of Palestinian terrorism, military strikes against Fatah training camps and mass arrests in Palestinian neighbourhoods, while arguably necessary for security, led enormous numbers of young Palestinians to volunteer for militant and terrorist groups. In the short term the expanded recruiting drive by Palestinian groups meant that there were more opportunities for Shin Bet to turn young terrorist recruits into informers. Many of the informers recruited in this context were only sources of short-term intelligence, since Fatah was rightly suspicious of recruits coming from the West Bank and many were turned away, imprisoned, or killed.[243] However, in the long term Israel's tactics have arguably increased the threat to its security. For example, during the first intifada Israel's use of collaborators and informers was deeply unpopular amongst Palestinians, and had the unfortunate consequence of sometimes galvanizing support for terror groups, even among communities that were once opposed to the use of terror tactics.[244] Instances of brutality against unarmed Palestinians, including children, made quelling resistance even harder.

In contrast to its striking successes against Palestinian terrorists, the Israeli intelligence community has had some spectacular failures in other theatres. In the case of Shin Bet, Raviv and Melman argue that agency's success against Palestinian terrorists in

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[241] Alon Ben-David, "Israel's Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine."
[242] Jones, "Fighting Networked Terrorist Groups," 297-8.
[243] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 253.
[244] Salim Tamari, "Eyeless in Judea," 41.

1967 came at the expense of its professional ethos. Arabic-speakers and HUMINT handling agents were recruited quickly and sometimes without the necessary evaluation of their suitability. Commanders demanded fast results, as the consequence of failure could be high, but unchecked ambition led to the rise of careerism in the service. Finally, because Shin Bet believed that every captured terrorist might possess critical intelligence, brutal interrogation methods were countenanced without any oversight.[245] For some time Shin Bet operated its own prison system within which it was the only governing agency and was not held accountable for the actions of its officers.

The most infamous mistake made by Israel's intelligence services was the failure to predict the 1973 invasion of Israel by Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. A more recent case of professional shortcoming was less significant for the losses it caused, but demonstrates the value of maintaining HUMINT assets in target groups. During the second war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 the IDF was at times tactically blind, due in large part to the lack of HUMINT sources available to AMAN. Though AMAN was able to effectively predict Hezbollah's strategy during the war, this evaluation was based on information gathered by signals and visual intelligence sources.[246] Before they invaded the Israelis were able to overhear Hezbollah members talking about their plans to use small units of heavily armed militants to bog down the Israeli advance, as well as rockets to attack Israeli rear areas; visual intelligence from satellite imagery showed the positions of Hezbollah bunkers and their more poorly hidden rocket sites. However, without informers inside Hezbollah's ranks capable of telling Israeli intelligence agents the exact

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[245] Raviv and Melman, *Every Spy a Prince*, 172-3.
[246] Uri Bar-Joseph, "Israel's Military Intelligence Performance in the Second Lebanon War," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 20(4), 2007, 597.

disposition and intentions of Hezbollah units, IDF soldiers on the ground were forced in many cases to react to the actions of their enemy.

Despite their occasional professional shortcomings, Israel's security and intelligence agencies remain some of the best in the world. In addition to "ingenuity, ruthlessness, and dishonesty," Israel's agencies possess other qualities that play a vital part in their success against their opponents. Their ability to recruit agents who can pass convincingly as members of the terrorists' own communities is an enormous help,[247] but as discussed this tactic was not used as frequently as the recruitment of informers in-place. Even in this case, however, having agent-handlers who are culturally aware and can fluently speak the language of the target group made recruiting informers significantly easier.

Tellingly for operations against Islamist terrorists, where they have been effective in counterterrorism Israeli intelligence agencies have focused on dismantling or damaging the middle strata of a terrorist group. These are individuals who choose the method and target of an attack, or who provide logistical support, or even lead attackers to their point of attack. Upper-level terrorist leaders are only occasionally targeted in order to damage an organization's morale or hinder its strategic planning process.[248] In the context of removing elements of a Palestinian terrorist organization's support and leadership elements, one author has argued that Israel's seizing and holding of group members has been more effective than targeted killings, for several reasons. Though targeted killings are relatively easy for Israelis to carry out, via air-launched munitions, they engender significant risks including non-combatant casualties and blowback.

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[247] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 500.
[248] Nadav Morag, "Measuring Success in Coping with Terrorism: The Israeli Case," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 28(4), 309.

Secondly, during the al-Aqsa intifada some captured senior terrorists provided valuable intelligence under interrogation. Furthermore, when a terrorist is captured rather than killed there is no 'martyr' to motivate revenge attacks, and the terrorists' morale and image are damaged as their ability to confront the Israelis militarily is publicly undermined.[249]

In both cases studied in this chapter, the intelligence and security agencies of the threatened states were faced with terrorist groups that resembled the Al Qaeda terrorist movement in one or more ways. In the case of the PIRA in Northern Ireland, the only resemblance is that it also resorted to a cellular group structure in an effort to avoid detection, compromise, and capture. Although initially effective, this method of operational security was hampered by the desire of the PIRA's members to communicate with each other, and their lack of sufficient training to instruct them on why maintaining the integrity of the cell system was important. Links between cells and breaches of security were exploited by Britain's intelligence agencies to great effect. Ultimately the PIRA lost the widespread support it had enjoyed within the Catholic population, largely because of its brutality and its targeting of civilians. While the local population supported the group, though, the British intelligence agencies did well to infiltrate the PIRA to the extent that they did. The two biggest flaws in British counter-terrorist HUMINT operations were the lack of intelligence sharing between agencies, and the use of people of questionable background as the only witnesses in criminal proceedings against PIRA members. Had British agencies found effective ways to share the intelligence they had gathered, the struggle against Northern Irish terrorism may have

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[249] John R Schindler, "Defeating the Sixth Column: Intelligence and Strategy in the War on Islamist Terrorism," *Orbis*, 49(4), Autumn 2005, 706.

ended much earlier. As for the use of criminal informants as lone witnesses, the obviation of this problem requires cooperation between HUMINT agencies and those collecting technological intelligence to build a body of evidence before taking an accused terrorist to trial.

In the second case study, there seem to be more similarities between the Al Qaeda movement of today and the Palestinian terrorist groups threatening Israel. In particular, Hamas and Hezballah are terror groups with explicit Islamist overtones in their ideology. Like Al Qaeda, neither is motivated primarily by religion, and Hamas in particular has been shown to be vulnerable to HUMINT infiltration, although less so that its secular counterparts among the Palestinians. Having to build an entire network of informers and collaborators from nothing, and having to re-build it after a period of neglect, Israeli intelligence agencies have demonstrated that even the most hardened of Islamist terrorist groups can be susceptible to a determined HUMINT campaign. Israel also demonstrated the need for a balanced counterterrorist campaign, one that uses diplomacy and negotiation in addition to deadly force. Success against the Palestinian terror groups came at the expense of professionalism and respect for human rights. The Israelis' occasional abuse of prisoners and killing of women and children, though accidental, only strengthened support for Palestinian terror groups as they could claim to be resisting Israel in the interests of Palestinian civilians. As in the current context of the counterterrorist campaign against international Islamist terrorism, until and unless the terror groups are shown to be detrimental to the interests of the people from whom they draw support and claim to protect, their base of power will not wither, nor will the ideology that they champion.

Using HUMINT Against Modern Islamist Terrorism

Exploiting human interactions as sources of information is one of the oldest and most effective methods of gathering intelligence on the intentions of state and non-state groups, including terrorists. Human intelligence-gathering is far from easy, and does require people who are experienced and well suited to the job. It is manpower intensive and can be financially costly, though not on the order of high-technology intelligence gathering methods. It engenders risk and often the abridgement of some of a state's own established rights and freedoms. For all its shortcomings, though, human intelligence is eminently effective when done properly. It requires little or no technical training and can be effective using a minimum of technology for command and control. HUMINT exposes the enemy's intentions, capabilities, and resources beyond what can be discerned through intercepted communications or observable activity.

The question remains as to whether those methods of HUMINT that were successful against terrorists previously will still be effective in the current context. In short, the answer is yes: methods used historically will continue to be useful in the face of Islamist extremist terrorism, despite the apparent differences between Islamist terrorists and their predecessors. This chapter will review the methods already discussed and reinforce their applicability to the current counterterrorist security context.

International radical Islamist terrorism is now a different entity than it was seven years ago: it has become dispersed, and where once the dominant group was Al Qaeda, with hundreds of members, there are now multiple smaller groups whose members taken together total in the thousands. The greatest challenge for scholars writing on the phenomenon of Al Qaeda, it seems, is to clearly define what it is at any given moment.

Most writers agree that Al Qaeda is no longer a single group made up of Central Asians

and Arabs who have all trained in Afghan camps. Most of Al Qaeda's original

operational members have been arrested or killed, but have been replaced by others,

while its central leaders who play ideological and doctrinal roles are still alive and are

still active from their hiding places that are probably in Pakistan. Meanwhile the group

has inspired the formation of at least dozens, possibly hundreds of smaller groups and

individual cells that espouse its ideology but have no permanent links with Al Qaeda's

central body. In the current context these multiple groups seem for the most part to be

separate entities, but in some cases there is evidence that they also maintain loose

associations with each other.[250] Al Qaeda has thus become harder to define and to isolate,

though its theatres of operation are reasonably well known. Al Qaeda has been

transformed from a single group, with relatively well-understood members, into a social

movement with connections between its constituents that are poorly understood by liberal

democratic observers, be they academic or government-military. While some of the

group's Afghanistan camp trainees are apparently still alive and actively planning attacks

from their bases in Pakistan,[251] there are far more individuals around the world willing to

carry out attacks ostensibly in the name of Al Qaeda's ideas.

Al Qaeda is no less dangerous because of this transformation, and may even be

more of a threat as Islamist terrorists worldwide claim to act on its behalf without

needing or waiting for direction from the group's central leadership. Marc Sageman has

compared Al Qaeda in its current dispersed state to anarchist terrorists of the 19th and

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[250] Michael Chandler and Rohan Gunaratna, *Countering Terrorism: Can We Meet the Threat of Global Violence?* London: Reaktion Books, 2007, 18.
[251] Angel Rabasa, et al. *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007, 55.

early 20th centuries, who were able to assassinate heads of state in France, Italy, Russia, and the US, all without a central leadership to coordinate their operations.[252] The concept of a violent jihad against liberal democracies has gained in popularity because of the perceived mis-treatment of Muslims worldwide, the dispersal of Islamist propaganda and terrorist skills on the internet, as well as the spread of terrorist knowledge by individuals who move from one theatre of conflict to another or to a targeted country.[253] Currently Al Qaeda has restored a measure of its training capacity in Pakistan's Western region, though no training camps on the scale of those that existed in Afghanistan could possibly operate without being detected and attacked by American or Pakistani forces.[254] This state of affairs makes the distribution of terrorist propaganda and skills critical for the movement's survival. Due to the movement's widespread popularity among downtrodden Muslims, and the relative plasticity of its religious ideology, angry young Muslims everywhere have become potential recruits, and the profile of Islamist terrorists as well-educated young males is no longer valid.[255] For these reasons, and because of effective monitoring measures that make communication and travel between cells very risky, the Al Qaeda social movement has become largely self-sustaining, at least in the short term. What this means operationally is that even without the influence of Al Qaeda's central leadership people are forming and are being recruited into Islamist terror cells.

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[252] Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad,* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 32.

[253] Ibid., 50; BA Jackson, JC Baker, and K Cragin, *Aptitude for Destruction: Organizational Learning in Terrorist Groups and Its Implications for Combating Terrorism, Vol 1.* Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2005, 61.

[254] Dirk Laabs and Sebastian Rotella, "Terrorists in Training Head to Pakistan," *Los Angeles Times* Online, 14 Oct 2007.

[255] Douglas Frantz, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat," *The Los Angeles Times*, 26 September 2004; Javier Jordan and Luisa Boix, "Al Qaeda and Western Islam," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16(1), Spring 2004, 2.

Radical Islamist terrorists have also become harder to detect and monitor since the attacks of September 11th. The dispersal of its members has likely extended the life of Al Qaeda as a phenomenon if not as a group; it will take longer to catch and apprehend individual groups and cells of self-motivated and self-taught Islamist terrorists than it would have taken to dismantle Al Qaeda had it remained a cohesive network. Thanks to high-profile cases in which communication links between terrorists have been breached, most Islamists now know to avoid the use of cell phones, email, and other electronic means of communication that are easily monitored by security intelligence agencies. Furthermore, cells formed independently by members of the same community have no need to communicate with each other or Al Qaeda group members via electronic means, and can thus avoid detection by means of electronic intelligence.[256] It appears that in the most recent cases of Islamist terrorist activity in liberal democracies communication with Al Qaeda's central leadership has been sporadic at best. In some cases the perpetrators of terrorist attacks had no ties to extremist Islam before the period immediately preceding the attack. This was the case in bombing attacks in Casablanca, in May 2003, and in the failed bombings in London and Glasgow airport in 2007, in which two of the accused participants were physicians.[257]

Adding to the difficulty of detection is the very fact that many of these independently formed cells draw on Muslims not only from their own community but from different ethnic communities as well, making these types of cells difficult to detect form the outside, and rendering ethnic profiling ineffective. Since 2001 the ethnic distribution and make-up of Islamist terror groups in general has changed considerably.

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[256] Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 141.
[257] Douglas Frantz, Josh Meyer, Sebastian Rotella, and Megan K. Stack. "The New Face of Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda Seen As Wider Threat,"; BBC News Online, "Doctors held in bomb attack probe," 2 July 2007.

Fundamentalist Islam is characterized by dissatisfaction and anger with the ruling elites of Muslim countries, feelings that prompt many Muslims to become more deeply attached to their religion in search of comfort and guidance. Fundamentalist imams and group leaders take advantage of this phenomenon to draw people toward their interpretation of Islam.[258] Meanwhile Muslims living in liberal democratic countries, though particulary those in Europe, feel sympathy for their co-religionists in developing and war-torn countries and have also become more religious and apt to be exploited by fundamentalists as a result. The extremist Muslims who fund or join terrorist groups move in the same circles and recruit members and support from fundamentalists.

Europe is singled out because its states have large Muslim populations that do not identify with their host country, and are more likely to feel alienated and discriminated against, an attitude which is exacerbated by the xenophobia and prejudice displayed by many native Europeans. This situation has allowed Islamists to take root in fundamentalist circles, and people that have European citizenship and can speak at least the local language if not several are being recruited for terrorist attacks, making it easy for them to move around. Furthermore, this type of Islamist terrorist now tends to stay inside Europe: any travel to high-interest countries with a known Islamist presence is bound to attract attention and is therefore avoided. For instance, the members of the two cells in London that carried out attacks in July 2005 were made up of men who, with only two exceptions, had spent their entire lives in the UK and had never travelled to countries

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[258] Max Taylor and John Horgan, "The Psychological and Behavioural Bases of Islamic Fundamentalism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 13(4), Winter 2001, 40-41.

with an Islamist presence. These two cells are very likely to have learned their bomb-making skills in the UK from information gathered on the internet.[259]

North Africa is another region that has experienced an increase in Islamist terror activity in the past few years. [260] The group that used to be known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat has changed its name to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and maintained a steady rhythm of attacks against government and foreign targets in North Africa, particularly Algeria. In mid-2007 it claimed responsibility for attacks that killed dozens of people across Algeria.[261] Most recently, in August 2008 a car bomb claimed by AQIM killed twelve Algerian employees of the Canadian engineering company SNC Lavalin.[262] Mauritania is also facing growing extremism, and some observers as well as Mauritanians worry that recent attacks blamed on AQIM, one of which killed four French tourists, are the beginning of increased terrorist activity in the country. While there are no indications that AQIM has established bases of operation in Mauritania, the August 2008 coup by the hard-line anti-Islamist Mauritanian army may give the group additional motivation to expand into the country.[263]

Though its dispersal will arguably allow Al Qaeda to survive, it was unlikely to have been a deliberate measure undertaken by the original group's central leadership. If Western states had not invaded Afghanistan, pushed the group's leadership into Pakistan's tribal region, and worked with Arab nations to freeze much of the group's assets, it is fair to assume that Al Qaeda would still be operating from its logistic centres

[259] Elaine Sciolino, "Europe Meets the New Face of Terrorism," *New York Times*, 1 August 2005.

[260] Douglas Frantz, et al. "The New Face of Al Qaeda."

[261] Gordon Corera, "Al-Qaeda resurgent six years on?" BBC New Online. 11 September 2007. Accessed 17 October 2008.

[262] BBC News Online, "Al Qaeda 'claims Algeria bombs,'" 22 August 2008. Accessed 30 Sept 2008.

[263] James Copnall, "How real is Mauritania's terror threat?" BBC News Online, 26 August 2008. Accessed same day.

and training bases in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda has a history of international scope, as its human resources were always spread relatively thinly around the world, maximizing the group's operational reach. However there is no reliable evidence to demonstrate that this was a calculated strategy, and the current dispersal certainly is not deliberate.[264] The ideological leadership would likely prefer to have control over those individuals who are carrying out operations in its name, if only to ensure that these are carried out properly. The majority of plots to carry out attacks in Europe over the past few years have been foiled at least in part because of a lack of expertise and focus.[265] Use of a cell structure has significant drawbacks in terms of command and control, because maintaining communication links between leadership elements and cells requires technology that can be compromised, or time consuming human couriers. This limits any group's ability to react quickly to dynamic events.[266] The lack of contact with Al Qaeda's central leadership and its more experienced operational members has led to a deterioration in the tradecraft of homegrown terrorists, as they have been predominantly self-taught using information gleaned from the internet. This means that members of independently-formed cells have been easy to detect and apprehend long before they carry out their attacks.[267]

Similarly, in both the case of the IRA and Palestinian terrorist groups a cellular group structure was adopted in response to effective strategies implemented by security agencies, and even in the face of that threat the security measures that these terror groups established for themselves were not adhered to consistently. Part of the reason for this is

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[264] Ian O Lesser, et al. *Countering the New Terrorism*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999, 9-10.
[265] Lawrence Freedman, "Terrorism as a Strategy," *Government and Opposition*, 42(3), Summer 2007, 338.
[266] James Kitfield, "Osama's Learning Curve," *National Journal*, 33(45), 3506-3511.
[267] Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 140.

the lack of consistent training for individual terrorists, but it is also due to the natural inclination of group members to want to communicate, particularly in the case of senior members with their subordinates. In the case of the Red Brigades in Italy, a group that tried to institute operational security through a cellular structure, the inclination of its members to maintain links with each other ultimately defeated the organization. In several instances Italian Red Brigade members bought safe houses that were to be occupied by a small group of terrorists who would then be independently responsible for carrying out attacks in their immediate region. Within two years of this strategy's implementation, the organization's central leadership had again retained control over operational decisions, exposing the group to compromise.[268] One can only hope that Islamist terrorists will make the same mistakes, putting themselves and their comrades at risk of detection and capture. Intelligence agencies capable of exploiting these breaches of operational security by turning group members into informers will be well placed to prevent terrorist attacks and ultimately undermine terrorist groups.

Several authors have argued that in its current form Al Qaeda will ultimately fail in its goal of creating a pan-Islamic Caliphate. Its leaders are in no position to govern people, and in its current form the group cannot hold ground against determined military pressure.[269] Unless Al Qaeda can turn itself into an effective guerrilla force and seize and control a state or a piece of territory big enough and profitable enough to give it a solid base of operations, it will begin to lose followers as its propaganda starts to ring

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[268] Gian Carlo Caselli and Donatella della Porta, "The history of the Red Brigades: organizational structures and strategies of action (1970-82)," in *The Red Brigades and Left-Wing Terrorism in Italy*, Ed. Raimondo Catanzaro, London: Pinter Publishers, 1991.
[269] Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 146.

hollow; eventually it will cease to exist as both a group and a social movement.[270] However, while the group and social movement exist they present a clear and present danger to the security and national interests of the states and people they threaten. The cost of adopting a defensive, reactive strategy may be very expensive in both financial terms and in lives lost. Human intelligence will play a significant role in the struggle against international Islamist terror given the increasing attention devoted to it, and those HUMINT methods that were effective in the past are and will be in use today and in the future. The contexts of the British and Israeli counterterrorist efforts are not so different from the current one as to be entirely unique. In Northern Ireland, British security services were dealing with long-serving, highly motivated and trained terrorists. In the occupied territories Israel was dealing with similar terrorists who were also motivated at least partially by their religious convictions. Both Irish and Palestinian terrorist groups were nonetheless susceptible to infiltration and subversion, and though using HUMINT against international Islamist terror groups will require different language skills and cultural awareness, the operational lessons learned by the British and Israelis will still be applicable today.

To highlight the conclusions drawn from the cases studied, there are two broad categories of HUMINT sources: infiltrators (who are in effect trained agents), and hired informers. With respect to the latter category, there are several methods of convincing or coercing a person to divulge information that they would otherwise keep secret. Broadly defined, these methods include bribery (with money, goods, services, or promises of asylum), blackmail, and entrapment. In all their guises, it is certain that these methods will be used against groups associated with the Al Qaeda movement. A fourth method is

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[270] Freedman, "Terrorism as a Strategy," 328.

the use of ideological or religious arguments to convince a person that they should turn on their erstwhile comrades. It was seldom in the historical cases studied that security agencies received intelligence from informers who cooperated for ideological reasons, but recent evidence suggests that some Islamist terrorists will be susceptible to recruitment through religious and ideological arguments, and this will be discussed below. Despite the worry that few of those individuals involved in the current wave of Islamist terrorism will be enticed or coerced to cooperate with intelligence agencies because of their deeply ingrained ideological motivation or religious fervour,[271] there are some recent examples that contradict this argument.[272] Marc Sageman has further argued that one of the most challenging obstacles to recruiting an informer in-place will be the strong emotional bonds that members of existing cells and groups form between each other.[273] This is basically true, but was also the case in both Ireland and the Palestinian territories; in both these historical cases, in fact, the societies that spawned terrorist groups had cultures of non-cooperation with government authorities even before a counter-terrorist HUMINT campaign was underway. Despite these obstacles British and Israeli intelligence agencies were nonetheless able to recruit productive informers. There is a caveat, and that is that intelligence agents had more difficulty recruiting informers from very hard-line anti-government areas, in County Armagh and the Gaza Strip respectively. To be frank, there is little recourse to such resistance. In the case of County Armagh, the IRA presence there remained a problem until the peace settlement in Northern Ireland began to have effect. In the case of the Gaza Strip, it has become the base of power for the group Hamas, which despite the best efforts of Israeli intelligence

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[271] Allen W Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence*, Guildford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, 2006, 178.
[272] Omar Nasiri, *Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda*, New York: Basic Books, 2006, 15.
[273] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 180.

agencies remains a serious threat to Israel's safety and security. In the context of Islamist terrorism, likely the best response to such tenacity is persistent targeting of middle-level members to undercut the group's operational capabilities.

Before referring to the applications of HUMINT methods against Islamist terrorism, there are quid pro quos and limitations that must be discussed in order to fully examine modern HUMINT. Because of the abridgement of civil liberties that they entail, HUMINT operations need to be very carefully overseen when used domestically and should meet a reasonable standard of due diligence with respect to human rights and liberties and legal oversight when used abroad. If such standards are not in place or are not enforced, abuses are bound to occur. This will erode the traditions of civil liberties in liberal democratic countries, undermine the prosecution of apprehended terrorists, and give terror groups ammunition for propaganda campaigns. In addition to standards and procedures of oversight, there should be a clear delineation between those agencies that perform foreign intelligence and domestic security intelligence. Those skills and methods that are effective in international counterterrorism may be not only detrimental in domestic intelligence-gathering but outright illegal. The same agency should not have a mandate for both domestic and international counterterrorism, and this delineation need not be a hindrance to intelligence sharing between organizations. This is an issue in very few liberal democratic countries, though Canada is an obvious example: the Canadian Security Intelligence Service collects both foreign and domestic counterterrorist intelligence. The ideal situation is one in which two or more agencies have separate mandates for security and foreign intelligence gathering. Britain's MI5 and MI6 are

excellent examples of two agencies that have separate mandates for intelligence collection but that also share intelligence effectively and efficiently.

Once cells are infiltrated, there are real operational problems getting timely actionable intelligence from an informer to his handling agency. Intelligence degrades in value with time, and this will be a challenge for the foreseeable future, even despite the advances in technology that allow remote high-speed communications.[274] The same technological vulnerabilities that are exploited by intelligence agencies can be exploited by terrorist groups. The technology needed to listen in on cellular phone conversations is relatively easy to acquire, and multiple Islamist terror groups have attracted members adept in the use of computer technology, raising the possibility that they might eavesdrop on email exchanges as well. Another unavoidable limitation is that informers can only provide useful, actionable information for a finite period. Using informers is less expensive than using professional agents precisely because hired informers have little to no training in the tradecraft of HUMINT, cannot in all cases be put through a vetting process to determine their suitability, and in many cases are even cooperating against their will. As a result they will have a tendency to be significantly less reliable than professionals. Omar Nasiri, a member of an Algerian Islamist terror group in Belgium who walked into the offices of the French foreign intelligence service and began giving them information, eventually fell out of favour: Nasiri complained that the French were not listening to him, and as time went on the French increasingly distrusted his motives and therefore the information he gave them.[275] The issue of an informer's credibility will be especially troublesome when using terrorist informers as witnesses in court. The testimony of the

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[274] Thomas Patrick Carroll, "The CIA and the War on Terror," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, 4(9), September 2002.
[275] Gordon Corera, "Spy Lifts Lid on al-Qaeda," BBC News Online, accessed 5 Oct 2007.

IRA 'supergrass' informants was dismissed from court when their cases were brought to trial in large part because most of the individuals had extensive criminal backgrounds and could corroborate virtually none of their testimony with other evidence. A more common problem is that informers endanger themselves by giving intelligence agencies information that must be acted upon. In some scenarios this will lead to the informer's exposure to his comrades, particularly in small groups or cells where few people have access to operational information.[276] Shin Bet found that when its informers were discovered and killed it made future recruitment rather difficult but could realistically do little to protect these individuals if the information they passed on could be used to prevent an attack.[277]

From Israel's Mossad comes an example of the risks that intelligence agencies run to their own agents when conducting HUMINT operations. In 1973 an experienced Mossad officer was murdered by Arab gunmen in Madrid while waiting for a meeting with an informer. Earlier two paid Arab informers had been killed in Paris. Mossad began to worry that its informer networks had been compromised, and it was argued by some that Mossad had relied too heavily on human informers and was vulnerable to the compromise of these sources. Some argued that pressure from the organization's leadership on its case officers to get results led to shoddy trade-work.[278] With modern methods of monitoring communications such instances of treachery are less likely, but a risk still exists for agent-handlers and will no doubt be a significant factor when an agency is considering carrying out a HUMINT operation or campaign.

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[276] Boaz Ganor, *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers*, London: Transaction Publishers, 2005, 52-3.

[277] Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, *Every Spy a Prince: The Complete History of Israel's Intelligence Community*, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1990, 380-1.

[278] Ronald Payne, *Mossad: Israel's Most Secret Service*, London: Bantam Press, 1990, 90.

There is no soft, gentle way of collecting HUMINT, and it is not glamorous nor in all cases particularly exciting. It requires long commitments of time and effort as well as close association with individuals that most people would tend to avoid. HUMINT operations must be carried out using those methods that will be viable and effective under the circumstances, and always with proper oversight. Motivations for cooperation are rarely simple and easily identifiable. They will be as mixed and varied as the reasons people cite for joining a terrorist organization. This is not a shortcoming of HUMINT; it does not make tradecraft harder. On the contrary, it opens up many possibilities for HUMINT practitioners to exploit.[279] In modern counter-terrorist HUMINT operations, case officers and operatives will be chosen for possession of certain skills required for the job, which are determined by the nature of the operation and the target group. Depending on these factors a different cultural sensitivity will be required in terms of language skills and knowledge of cultural customs and norms. Keen inter-personal and social skills, independence and self-confidence are critical for a person to be accepted in a new environment and successful as a HUMINT agent handler or an undercover agent. One of the biggest differences between historical HUMINT operations and those against Islamist terror groups today is that in the past informers and agents needed to be ethnically similar to the individuals in targeted groups; this is not the case currently.[280]

In the historical cases studied, British and Israeli security agencies were for the most part faced with an enemy that was culturally and ethnically distinct from the populations threatened, which limited or eliminated the possibility of double-agents infiltrating terror

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[279] Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence*, 181.
[280] Ephraim Kahana, "HUMINT vs. Terrorism: The Israeli Case," Paper presented at the 47th Annual International Studies Association Convention on North-South Divide and International Studies, 22-25 March 2006, San Diego, California, 4.

groups from the outside unless they were of the same ethnicity and culture. In the current context this obstacle does not seem to be universal amongst all Islamist terror groups. There have even been several cases in which Caucasian Westerners have converted to Islam and subsequently joined Islamist terror groups in their home countries. The best example comes from Germany, where an Islamist terror cell was discovered and arrested while trying to build a stockpile of bomb-making supplies. Two of the cell's members were native-born Caucasian Germans who had converted to Islam in an extremist mosque.[281] In June 2007 three German citizens of Turkish extraction were arrested in Pakistan close to the Afghanistan border, and authorities thought that up to twelve such individuals may have travelled to the area for terrorist training.[282] There are also cases of young women joining Islamist terror groups, though documented instances of this are still few in number.[283]

These incidents suggests that it is possible for security agencies to fake a similar conversion and infiltrate a trained agent into the ranks of an Islamist group. Several authors have compared this type of trained agent to Rudyard Kipling's character Kim in *The Great Game*, whose knowledge of cultural customs and language allowed him to blend in with the local populace, even among criminal elements.[284] However, training such a person in the tradecraft of counterterrorist espionage could take a prohibitively long time to produce actionable intelligence, and will almost certainly require the agent to participate in activities considered illegal by his or her home country in order to gain the

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[281] "Terror Shock for German Press," BBC News Online, 6 September 2007, accessed 5 November 2008.
[282] Gordon Corera, "German concern over 'terror plot'", BBC News Online, 5 September 2007, accessed 17 October 2007.
[283] Karla J Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 30(2), 2007, 125.
[284] Frederick Hitz, *The Great Game: The Myths and Reality of Espionage*, Knopf Publishing, 2005, 161.

trust of the terrorists being monitored. Furthermore, the costs of training and supplying such individuals will be great, not to mention the possible cost in human lives if such double-agents are discovered.

For these reasons it seems that it will be more cost effective and beneficial for security intelligence agencies to hire or recruit individuals who are already part of a terrorist group or social movement to collect intelligence on their fellow group members. Even with respect to the recruitment and exploitation of informers within terror groups, the transnational nature of Islamist terrorism is one of its greatest vulnerabilities. Because men and women of any ethnic origin who espouse the appropriate religious and cultural ideologies have been allowed into Islamist terror groups, theoretically a group member who has been recruited as an informer in one group could move between groups as the need to collect intelligence arose. Obstacles to this tactic include language barriers, and more importantly the need for terrorists to trust each other before working together. This tactic has worked before, however, in Northern Ireland (recall Raymond Gilmour, who moved from the INLA to the PIRA) and the Israeli occupied territories.

Recruiting informers in-place nonetheless engenders some risk to agent handlers, for the same reason that it may seem contradictory to the threatened liberal democratic state: it requires cooperation with people who are already members of a terrorist group, and who are therefore likely to have a history of criminality and violence. Once again, though, squeamishness about using and cooperating with such people will only leave liberal democratic countries more vulnerable to threats from terror groups that cannot easily be monitored any other way. Public outcry in the United States during the 1990s over the CIA's use of people with criminal backgrounds led then-Director of Central

Intelligence John Deutch to establish a set of guidelines which theoretically prohibited American intelligence agencies from dealing with people who had a history of violence or human rights abuses.[285] It has been postulated that adherence to these guidelines was one of the reasons that the American intelligence community was so lacking in HUMINT assets before September 11th, 2001. Such prohibitions are sanctimonious and futile: though they might protect the sensibilities of liberal democratic citizens, they leave them needlessly exposed to threats. HUMINT sources with shady backgrounds can be exploited without undermining the civil liberties of democratic citizens. What is required in these instances are not guidelines that prohibit cooperation with such people but ones that dictate the boundaries and limits of such cooperation such that intelligence agencies are not abetting and exacerbating human rights violations and acts of violence against innocent people. Equally detrimental to counter-terrorist efforts is the over-reliance on informers with sinister backgrounds as sources of information, particularly in the case of judicial proceedings. Recall from the Northern Ireland case study that the over-reliance of Britain's security intelligence agencies on single informers of questionable background led to dozens of mistrials and allowed hundreds of terrorists to walk free.

For any kind of coercive pressure to be viable and legitimate, its use needs to be governed by clear guidelines that delineate what types of pressure are possible in which situations, and whose limits cannot be exceeded.[286] Furthermore, looking after the safety and needs of informers during and after they have been of service is important, not only in deference to human rights, but to ensure that other informers remain cooperative and that potential informers are not scared off. However, as discussed above very few

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[285] John Deutch, ""Fighting Foreign Terrorism." Speech at Georgetown University. 5 September 1996.
[286] Hillel Cohen and Ron Dudai, "Human Rights Dilemmas in Using Informers to Combat Terrorism: The Israeli-Palestinian Case," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 17(1), Spring/Summer 2005, 235.

informers will be willing to cooperate freely or because of religious and ideological arguments, and in order to ensure their cooperation various forms of coercion will be necessary. This is where modern intelligence agencies will look to their forebears for experience in conducting effective HUMINT operations, and those historical methodologies that have been discussed will come into play. Bribery will always be a viable means of convincing people to inform on their compatriots, and will include both financial and other incentives. Just as the Israeli security services bribed Palestinians with travel visas and medical treatment, so too can liberal democratic countries offer Islamist terrorists such incentives. Someone paid for the intelligence they provide is more likely to fabricate or embellish information in the hope that they will ensure or enlarge their payment. Therefore, in order to verify whether a piece of intelligence is legitimate or not multiple paid informants should be exploited.[287]

Blackmail is also likely to work in cases where a terrorist has a weakness or fear that can be exploited, or where monetary incentives have not worked.[288] In the case of Omar Nasiri, he walked in to the French foreign intelligence service because he had stolen money from his organization, and knew he was likely to suffer violent consequences if caught. Nasiri agreed to help because he felt he needed the promise of safety; the tacit threat was that if he did not help, he would be left to his own devices, and this is ultimately what happened.[289] Arguably another type of blackmail will be the denial of the very political freedoms and services used to bribe informers, by either deportation or imprisonment. Recall the example from Northern Ireland in which a member of the

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[287] Abram N Shulsky and Gary J Schmitt, *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence*, Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc, 2002, 18.

[288] Ibid., 17.

[289] Corera, "Spy Lifts Lid on al-Qaeda,"; Omar Nasiri, *Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda*, New York: Basic Books, 2006, ix.

PIRA agreed to work for British intelligence in large part to avoid uprooting his family or being separated from them. An alternate version of this type of blackmail, one that is not only reprehensible but foolhardy with respect to securing a prosecution, is the CIA's infamous 'rendition' to third countries that are known to use torture. In addition to jeopardizing the possibility of convicting such terrorists and keeping them in jail, this type of activity is likely to increase what the Americans have labelled 'blow-back': negative repercussions that result from the activity of friendly agencies who instigate increased terrorist activity.

Entrapment, effectively another form of blackmail, will work in cases where the individual has not yet become fully committed to the group or cause, and has a history of petty crime. According to RAND, France's Directorate of Territorial Security maintains an extensive network of informers in French Muslim communities. In many instances these informers are convicted felons who gained amnesty for their cooperation with the police and security services.[290] However, historically it has been more cost-effective and successful to recruit informers from within an existing organization or social network. Hiring and training suitable individuals to infiltrate a group from the outside is not only dangerous, it may fail due to any number of reasons: screening by the terrorist group, specific and complex ideology espoused by the group that precludes an outsider from blending in, as well as properly exercised cellular compartmentalization.[291] One method that may circumvent a terrorist group's security measures is exploiting the ties between an operational terrorist or associate and his family and friends outside the group.

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[290] Peter Chalk and William Rosenau, *Confronting "The Enemy Within": Security Intelligence, the Police, and Counterterrorism in Four Democracies*, Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2004, 18.

[291] Kurt M Campbell and Michele A Flournoy, *To Prevail: An American Strategy for the Campaign Against Terrorism*, 86.

Sageman has argued that recruiting the aid of a person close to a known terrorist, but not part of a terrorist group themselves, will be one of the most effective HUMINT methods.[292] These individuals, since they are not committed members of an extremist group, are more likely to cooperate with security intelligence agencies, but will have to be convinced to approach their friend or relative to acquire actionable intelligence.

Most of those authors writing on countering Islamist terrorism assume that ideology will not be a reason for terrorist group members to defect and begin giving information to intelligence services. There is some evidence that this is not the case, and that Islamist terrorists can be persuaded that the path to Muslims' salvation does not lie in returning to a harsh and brutal Islamic way of life, to the point that they are willing to cooperate with state agencies.[293] There is a great difference between the Quran and the "hadiths" and "sunna", the records of the words and acts of the prophet Mohammed and his companions. The hadiths come primarily from the last ten years of Mohammed's life, when he was constantly engaged in fighting, and thus they contain many references to violence. The Quran, by contrast, contains far more references to peace than to violence, and Muslim religious scholars and imams have used this difference to some convince captured terrorists to abandon their violent struggle.[294] Saudi Arabia in particular appears to have had some success in convincing Islamists to abandon violent jihad using scholars to undermine the theological underpinnings of their radical beliefs. Of all those methods available to intelligence agencies for recruiting Islamist terrorists as informers, ideological and theological persuasion represents the only novel method encountered in

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[292] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 181.
[293] Frederick Hitz, "The Myths and Current Reality of Espionage," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence*, 18(4), January 2005.
[294] Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 37.

researching this paper. There is no public record of this method actually being used to recruit terrorist informers, however, and even the evidence from the Saudi Arabian program remains questionable. For instance, though the Saudis claim to have 'rehabilitated' over 1500 radicals over the course of several years with little recidivism,[295] no clear distinction has been made between members of radical Islamist terror cells and individuals who were simply members of radical mosques.

To undermine those members of Islamist groups who would be ideological leaders, the sense of glory must be taken out of Jihadism. The most effective way to do this is to publicly arrest and detain terrorists, rather than secretly detain them or have them killed. Once in jail, ideologues lose their attractiveness to their followers and cannot become martyrs for their cause. In Marc Sageman's words: "There is no glory in being taken to prison in handcuffs."[296]

In terms of which would be the best targets for HUMINT operations, this would depend on the individual group: more sophisticated groups with better command structures would suffer from the loss of upper and middle-level leaders. Middle-level leaders in particular are important to the long-term effectiveness of any organization, including terrorist groups. It is at this level that group members are responsible for relaying command and control messages, and these individuals will be the ones to replace senior group members, lending the group longevity.[297] More poorly trained groups may, in the long run, suffer more from the capture and/or elimination of their 'foot-soldiers'

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[295] *The Economist*, "The Struggle Against Al Qaeda," 23 October 2008.
[296] Ibid., 153.
[297] Bruce Hoffman, "Lessons of 9/11," Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2002, 21; Nadav Morag, "Measuring Success in Coping with Terrorism: The Israeli Case," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 28(4), 309.

since this will hamper their operations; killing or capturing the leaders of these amateur groups has in many cases only spurred them to accelerate their operations.[298]

The internationalization of terrorism and especially the use of the internet gives security intelligence agencies opportunities to infiltrate terrorist cells. Trust is built through online connections, even before terrorists have met each other. In this way HUMINT can make gains from signals intelligence. Furthermore, intelligence sharing between different states can lead to significant gains in an age where terrorists often operate across international borders. The most notable exception is the number of Islamist terrorists now operating in Europe who are home-grown and not as likely to operate across borders: in the instances of Germany, Denmark, and the UK those cells that formed inside these countries planned and carried out attacks inside them. This makes them less vulnerable to interception, but when they use the internet to communicate, recruit, or perform other support activities, they open themselves to infiltration by agents and the recruitment of informers.

It has been argued that the establishment of terrorist cells within Muslim diaspora communities, some of which include fundamentalist elements that are initially hard to discern from extremists, makes identifying the terrorists more difficult. However, this assimilation makes those cells more dependent on their community and therefore more vulnerable to infiltration. Indeed, dependence on the local community increases the number of potential informers, since this creates more links between cell members and the community that can be exploited.[299] Furthermore, cells with little or no connection to Al Qaeda's central leadership may actually seek out the type of expertise that they would

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[298] Scott Atran, "Op-Ed: Leaner, Meaner Jihad," *New York Times*, 16 March 2004.
[299] Calvert Jones, "Al-Qaeda's Innovative Improvisers: Learning in a Diffuse Transnational Network," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 19(4), 2006, 566.

otherwise have learned in training camps and in combat with Western forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. This search for subject-matter experts within their community and neighbouring Muslim diaspora communities will expose them to detection as well as infiltration; either the experts that had been sought out could be apprehended, or security intelligence agencies might pose as suppliers of the very information the terrorists are seeking.

In both case studies, the value of low-grade intelligence was recognized only late in counterterrorist operations. In the case of the British and Israelis, much of the collection of low-grade intelligence was performed by soldiers on patrol inside communities that typically supported or bred terrorists. For the purposes of countering Islamist terrorism in liberal democracies, a similar collection strategy should be maintained within the Muslim communities at higher risk for terrorist activities. Some authors have suggested that police officers are in an ideal position to collect such intelligence, as they should have intimate knowledge of the communities in which they work.[300] There are some obstacles to this method, the most significant of which include connectivity between security intelligence services and police departments, declassification of certain intelligence in order to provide police with a framework for collection, or alternatively the granting of higher security clearances to police officers. None of these obstacles are insurmountable, but all increase the possibility of a breach of operational security, and the culture of secrecy within intelligence agencies could be a serious obstacle to efficient cooperation with police services. In the event that cooperation with police is not possible or is undesirable, security agencies themselves will have to develop relationships within the

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[300] Eric Herren, "Tools for Countering Future Terrorism." Online source: [http://www.ict.org.il/apage/5521.php]. Accessed 27 March 2007.

communities to be targeted for low-grade intelligence collection. These relationships

must be developed in such a way that confidence is developed among community

members, not only to encourage cooperation with security agents but to encourage the

incidence of 'walk-ins', in which citizens with information independently offer it to

security services.[301]

The specific methods by which low-grade intelligence is collected are not the topic of

this study, but there are instances in which security services have already undertaken such

programs. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) claims it places

considerable importance on liaising with local ethnic community members, in order to

explain the work that CSIS might be conducting in the community, assess the

community's likely responses to international political developments, and to determine

which groups are prone to terrorist activity. The Australian Security Intelligence

Organization relies on a similar strategy to obviate the need to hire, train, or bribe

informers to discern extant or latent threats.[302] Indeed, terrorist cells and support

networks may be uncovered simply by maintaining and nurturing these types of

community relationships, considering that many of the Islamist terror cells uncovered in

recent years have been formed by Western citizens and landed immigrants.[303] The

establishment of these types of relationships is only a matter of making community

members and leaders see that supporting one's own side is more beneficial or

advantageous than joining or abetting a terrorist group.[304]

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[301] Bruce Hoffman, "The logic of suicide terrorism," *Atlantic Monthly*, 291(5), June 2003, 47.
[302] Chalk, *Confronting the "Enemy Within"*, 27-8, 35.
[303] David A Charters, "Counterterrorism Intelligence: Sources, Methods, Process and Problems," in David A Charters, Ed., *Democratic Responses to International Terrorism*, Ardsley, New York: Transnational Publishers, 1991.
[304] George Packer, "Knowing the Enemy: Can Social Scientists Redefine the 'War on Terror'?" *New Yorker*, 82(42), 18 December 2006.

These community connections will have the effect of slowing extremists' recruitment of members and support, as it will oblige Islamists to proceed more cautiously and spend more time and resources on operational security.[305] One of the reasons that the September 11th hijackers were so effective was that they were able to trust their fellow jihadists who joined them for the operation from other cells or mosques. They did not need to worry, at the time, that their compatriots might be spies or informers. Infiltrating cells will spread suspicion through multiple groups, as Islamists become wary of cooperating with each other in case one or the other has been compromised.[306]

Low-grade intelligence will always have some degree of value to practitioners of HUMINT, either in establishing background or providing context for higher grade intelligence. For example, low-grade intelligence can identify which mosques are explicitly Salafi or extremist. There are many fundamentalist mosques that are not hubs of terrorist activity or recruiting points. In order to protect individuals' rights, avoid instigating blowback, and to conserve resources, proper identification of terrorist centres is critical.[307] Furthermore, reliable links between community members and security intelligence officers will act as an early-warning network in the event that a terrorist cell or individual 'surfaces' in order to look for the resources or expertise necessary to carry out attacks.[308]

John Deutch, during a 1996 public address in which he defended his stringent policies regarding the screening of informers, claimed that the CIA at the time was making great

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[305] Javier Jordan and Luisa Box, "Al Qaeda and Western Islam," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16(1), Spring 2004, 9.

[306] John R Schindler, "Defeating the Sixth Column: Intelligence and Strategy in the War on Terrorism," *Orbis*, 49(4), Autumn 2005, 710.

[307] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 144, 177.

[308] Alex P Schmid, "Preventing Terrorism: Towards a Multi-Pronged Approach," in *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, Tore Bjorgo, ed., London: Routledge, 2005, 233.

strides in improving and re-establishing its HUMINT networks and resources.[309] In the aftermath of the attacks on September 11th, it seems many would have been predisposed to disagree. Without doubt, in the past seven years American intelligence agencies and their allies have been working to improve their HUMINT capabilities. In light of what has been discussed here, it should not be necessary for the security intelligence services in threatened liberal democracies to introduce entirely new methods and procedures, but rather improve and broaden existing programs.[310] With expanded networks of informers, the volume of information that needs to be processed will increase, and if manning levels do not similarly expand an intelligence agency runs the risk of overlooking valid pieces of intelligence. A balance must be struck between increasing the number of analysts and obtaining the maximum return on funds invested in HUMINT operations. Although HUMINT is currently a reactive measure, being undertaken in response to the recognition of deficiencies in this area, when sufficient human and monetary resources are dedicated to a standing HUMINT capability terrorist groups may be unable to begin support activities or active operations. If the pre-requisite patterns are identified and potential members observed their activities may be subverted before they ever achieve operational status.[311]

In terms of the professional status of counterterrorist HUMINT operators, both official and unofficial agents will be of use. Official cover agents are those who work from an embassy or consulate and are identified as diplomatic employees of their home country. Unofficial cover agents are those who operate in secret, without exposing their

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[309] Deutch, "Fighting Foreign Terrorism."
[310] Laura K Donohue, "In the Name of National Security: US Counterterrorist Measures, 1960-2000," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Autumn 2001, 13(3), 47.
[311] Fernando Jimenez, "Spain: The Terrorist Challenge and the Government's Response," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 4(4), Winter 1992, 129.

affiliation to any government or agency. There are disadvantages to unofficial cover

missions, in particular the fact that it can be a thankless task with little or no recognition,

in addition to being quite dangerous. However, unofficial cover agents will in many

cases have the best chance of successfully infiltrating the types of social circles inhabited

by terrorists, such as criminal gangs, black markets, smuggling rings, and radical

mosques.[312] Infiltrating such organizations and groups can facilitate a plethora of

opportunities for HUMINT collection.[313] Furthermore, in regions where Islamists enjoy

popular support, only unofficial cover agents will be able to establish links with members

of the populace and extremist groups in order to recruit informers.

The methods and targets of HUMINT discussed here are not novel or ground-

breaking. They have been thought of before and the recommendations made here should

already be in use by professional intelligence agencies throughout the liberal democratic

world. The types of people involved in collecting HUMINT are many and varied, but

they will certainly share a few characteristics. First and foremost are interpersonal skills

and a keen sense of empathy. Whether someone is trained to infiltrate terror groups or

manage such individuals and recruit informers, they will need to be able to establish

relationships with people who are culturally and ethnically distinct, suspicious, and even

violent. Establishing such relationships can be taxing and is quite personal, and requires

individuals who can read other people's emotions and predict their reactions.[314] Even

when very good people are recruited to perform this type of intelligence collection, it can

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[312] Francis H Marlo, "WMD Terrorism and US Intelligence Collection," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11(3), 1999, 67.

[313] Richard L Russel, "A Weak Pillar for American National Security: The CIA's Dismal Performance Against WMD Threats," *Intelligence and National Security*, 20(3), September 2005, 481.

[314] Peter Wilson, "Preparing to Meet New Challenges," in *Intelligence and Human Rights in the Era of Global Terrorism*, Steve Tsang, ed., Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2007, 115.

take years to establish networks of informers who provide reliable actionable intelligence. Particularly in cases where the goal is to arrest and charge terrorists, multiple sources of intelligence will be required to provide sufficient evidence to convict terrorists in judicial systems based on a Western standard of proof.

Conclusion

International Islamist terrorism in its current form is significantly different than

that which spawned the terrorists who carried out the attacks of September 11th and the

London and Madrid transit bombings. Al Qaeda's leadership no longer has direct links

with cells around the world, working instead to establish ideology that radical Muslims

around the world can follow without needing direct guidance from a central leadership

cadre. Islamist terrorism is now certainly more dispersed than before the attacks of

September 11th, and now counts on the activities of associated groups and disassociated

cells around the world to carry out terrorist operations. Having seen numerous terrorists

get caught and arrested or killed has led most to avoid the use of communication

technologies that are relatively easily compromised, such as cell phones and email. The

use of human couriers to transmit messages, as well as the free dissemination of terrorist

skills and information via the internet, has made cells of well-trained Islamist terrorists

difficult to find and infiltrate. Under these circumstances there is an opportunity for

intelligence agencies to use HUMINT methods to fill the gap that electronic intelligence

will leave empty.

Since the beginning of 2007 Al Qaeda and its affiliated terror groups have been in

decline. With the American military 'surge' in Iraq apparently working, as well as the

efforts of local Iraqi Awakening Councils, Al Qaeda's members and affiliates in Iraq lost

room to manoeuvre, and the country slowly ceased to be a haven for them.[315]

Furthermore, the effectiveness of police and security agencies in liberal democratic

countries and elsewhere have made for more hostile environments for Islamist terrorists

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[315] BBC News Online, "Iraq's Awakening Councils," 1 Oct 2008.

around the world.[316] One might think in this case that the role for globally operating

counter-terrorist agencies, much less those practicing dangerous and expensive HUMINT

operations, will soon diminish; but other circumstances currently threaten to offer the Al

Qaeda movement room for growth. The terror attacks on Mumbai, India, in November

2008 exposed a potential 'new front' in the worldwide struggle against Islamist terrorism.

The Al Qaeda movement was doing poorly in Muslim-dominated countries in large part

because its brutal tactics targeted fellow Muslims and quickly undermined its base of

support. In countries with a Muslim minority, though, the Islamist terror movement can

claim to be championing the rights of oppressed Muslims.[317] Islamist militant groups in

India, including India's first homegrown Muslim terror group the Indian Mujahideen, are

doing just that. This group, and others like it based in Kashmir, draw much support from

similar groups and sympathizers in Pakistan that have begun to align their training and

tactics with regional Islamist groups.[318] Throughout Central Asia the scenario of a 'new

front' will remain a serious problem as long as Pakistan is unable to control its Western

areas, currently one of the last havens for Islamist radicals. Ultimately the best remedy to

radical Islamism is for India to reform its cumbersome and occasionally discriminatory

bureaucracy and instigate economic growth throughout the country. Until these goals are

met in India and throughout developing countries with concentrated Muslim populations,

though, there will still be a need for intelligence agencies to infiltrate and undermine

Islamist terror groups, not only before they instigate violence in their host states and

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[316] BBC News Online, "Cases Have 'Cut UK Terror Threat,'" 7 Jan 2009; *The Economist*, "The Struggle Against Al Qaeda," 23 October 2008.
[317] *The Economist*, "Terror in India," 27 Nov 2008.
[318] *The Economist*, "Fragile State," 5 Dec 2008.

neighbouring countries but more importantly before they manage to establish independent cells capable of carrying out attacks around the world.

In the context of intelligence-gathering, HUMINT is the oldest method available and will remain one of the most effective. For various reasons, the HUMINT capability of many liberal democracies, most importantly the US, was significantly abridged in the years preceding the attacks of September 11th. Both policy-makers and academics in the US and around the world subsequently began to call for an improvement in this capability in order to counter the threat from Islamist terror groups. However, few who have written on the subject seemed willing or able to elucidate how and whether intelligence agencies in liberal democracies would be able to successfully carry out HUMINT operations against these groups. Modern transnational Islamist terrorism is an entity that is difficult to define, and one which presents security and intelligence agencies with difficult challenges. The threat presented by the modern Islamist terrorist movement is not insurmountable, but should be countered by all available means, including HUMINT.

HUMINT is still regarded with suspicion by some members of the security and intelligence communities. Since people can make mistakes and errors in judgement, Electronic and Technical Intelligence are regarded by their proponents as being superior to HUMINT. In the US the intelligence community's mission to improve its HUMINT capability is ongoing. In March 2008 the Office of the Director of National Intelligence released a directive making the director of the CIA the national HUMINT manager for the US intelligence community. This move makes the office of the CIA director the office of primary interest for the integration of US HUMINT operations, delineation of roles and missions, as well as the establishment of uniform standards. While these steps

should make US HUMINT both more effective and credible, the intelligence community should also strive to integrate HUMINT with the other intelligence-gathering disciplines.[319] By feeding HUMINT into operations using TECHINT, and vice versa, intelligence agencies will be facilitating the types of links that should lead to more efficient and effective intelligence operations.

The historical cases in which HUMINT campaigns have been mounted against terrorist groups similar to those currently threatening liberal democracies and their allies should offer contemporary practitioners of HUMINT some lessons on effective methodology. In both Northern Ireland and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, state intelligence agencies managed to undermine and at times neutralize the activities of these terrorist groups. It should be the case that the methodology that was effective in these cases will still be effective today against modern Islamist terrorism, considering that the modern threat is not vastly different from that faced in these historical cases.

Based on the information gleaned from the historical case studies, it is likely that the HUMINT methods that were effective in gathering actionable intelligence for use against terrorist groups in the past will be effective against modern Islamist terrorist groups. Despite the differences between the Al Qaeda movement and its predecessors, such as the dispersal of its cellular network and the fervent religious convictions of its subsidiary groups, its members will nonetheless likely be susceptible to methods of recruitment that have been used before. These include bribery, extortion, and blackmail, and variants of these. It does seem possible that some members of Islamist terror groups will be amenable to ideological arguments for helping intelligence agencies. Saudi Arabia in particular appears to have had some success in convincing Islamists to abandon violent

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[319] *Jane's Intelligence Digest*, "Spies to Come In from the Cold?" 7 Nov 2008.

jihad using scholars to undermine the theological underpinnings of their radical beliefs. Of all those methods available to intelligence agencies for recruiting Islamist terrorists as informers, ideological and theological persuasion represents the only novel method encountered in researching this paper. There is no public record of this method actually being used to recruit terrorist informers, however, and even the evidence from the Saudi Arabian program remains questionable. For instance, though the Saudis claim to have 'rehabilitated' over 1500 radicals over the course of several years with little recidivism,[320] no clear distinction has been made between members of radical Islamist terror cells and individuals who were simply members of radical mosques.

Despite the differences between international Islamist terrorism and the terrorist groups that have preceded it, there is nothing about the Al Qaeda movement that will lend it special protection from infiltration by HUMINT operations. The religious fervour displayed by some members of Islamist terror groups is not espoused by all of them and can in many cases be undermined. The dispersal of the movement's members and the isolation of its cells makes them less vulnerable to detection if they practice operational security properly, which most do not, but leaves them nonetheless susceptible to compromise and infiltration before and during the process of joining the group. Ethnicity and prior culture no longer seem crucial elements for people to join Islamist terror groups as long as one espouses the right ideology. Far from requiring entirely new methods for recruiting informers and agents, modern international Islamist terrorism can be undermined and undone by the same methods that people have used in the past to gain information on the actions of their opposition.

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[320] *The Economist*, "The Struggle Against Al Qaeda," 23 October 2008.

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